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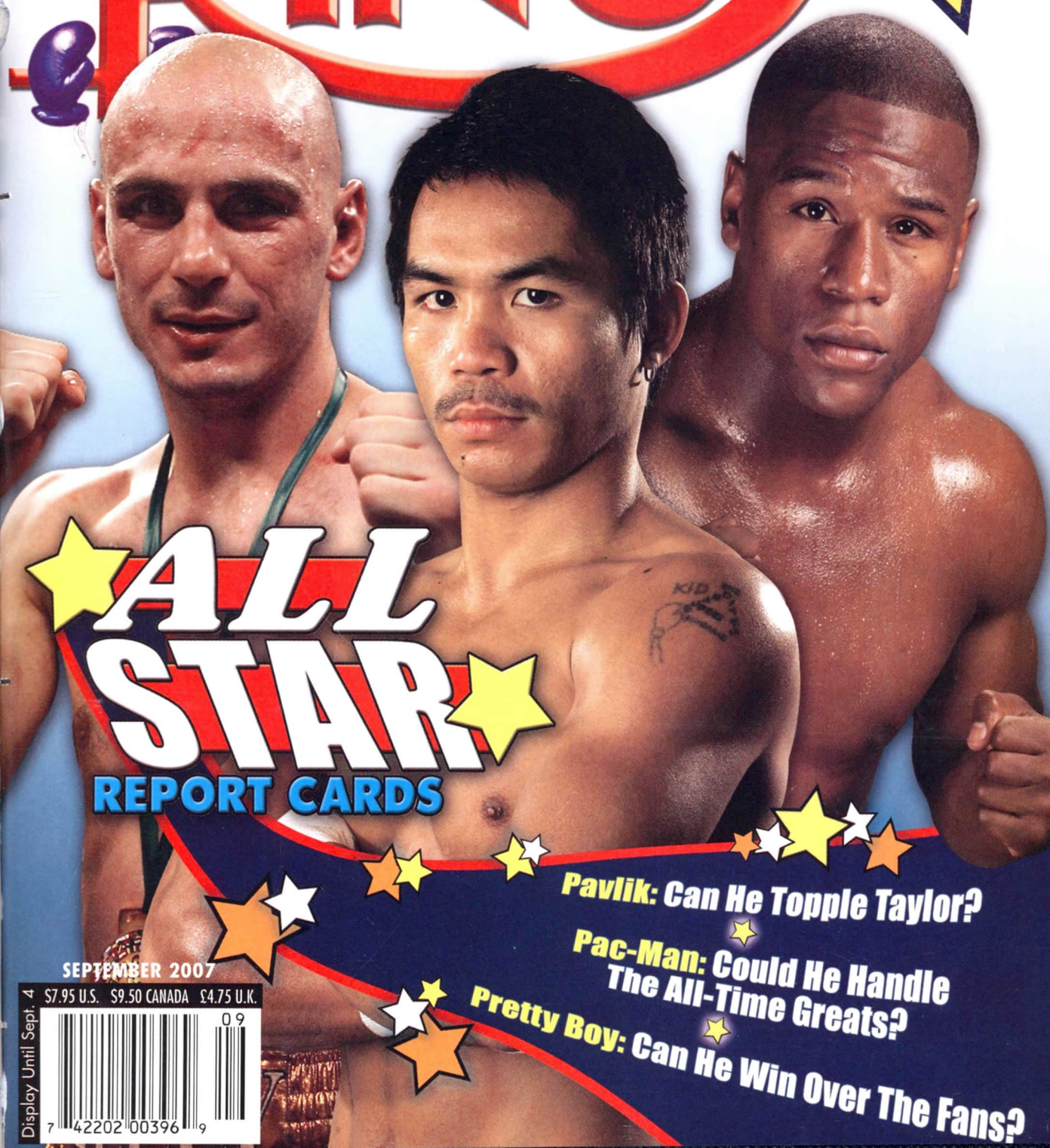

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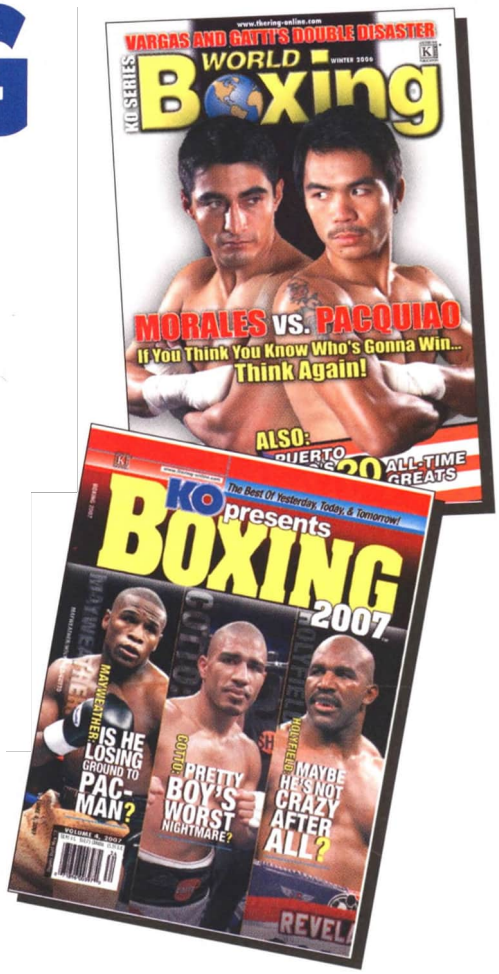

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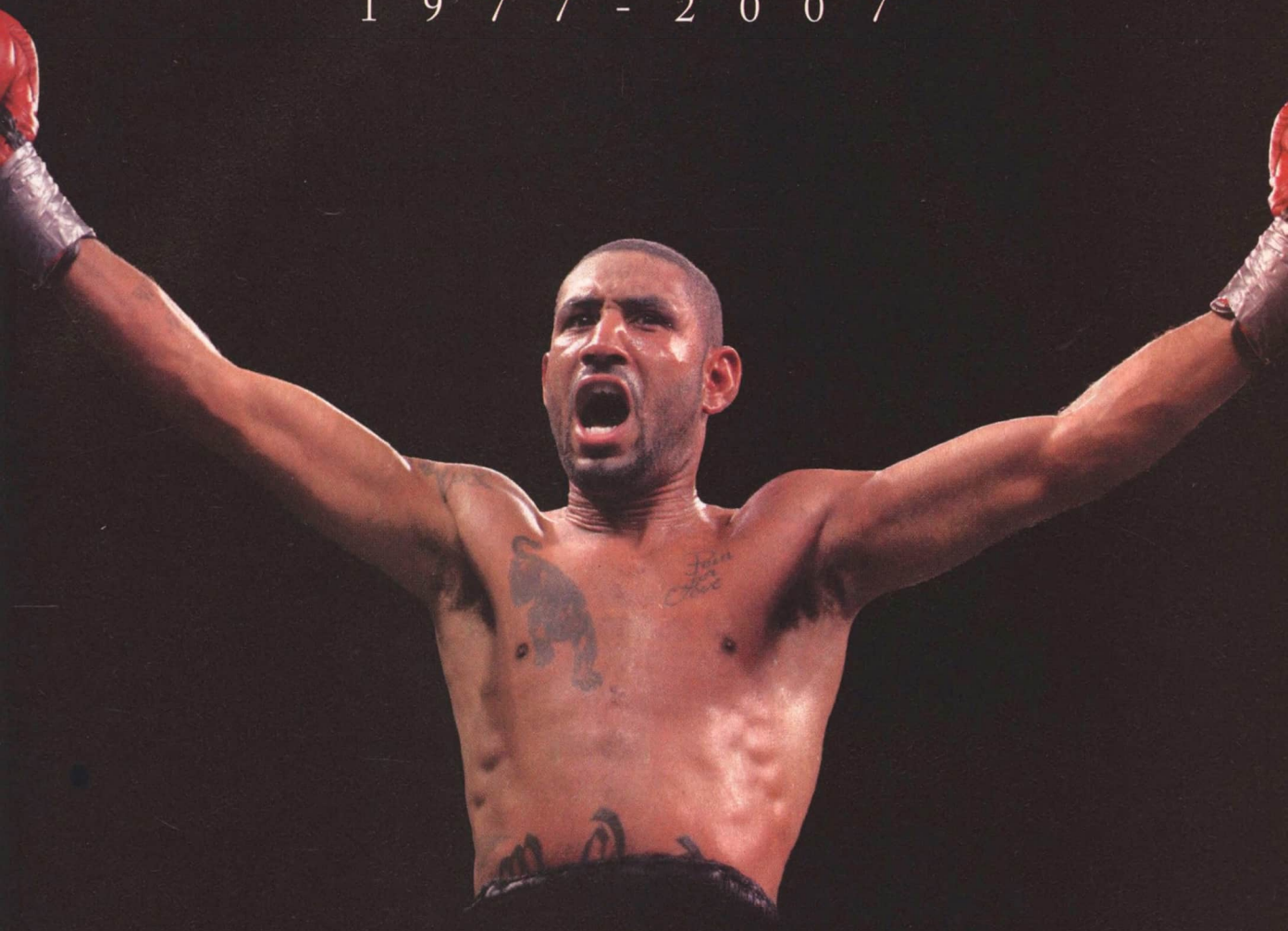
1977-2007



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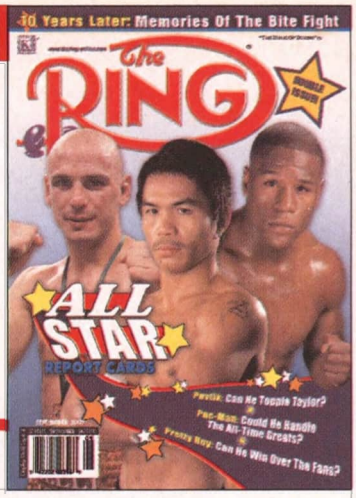

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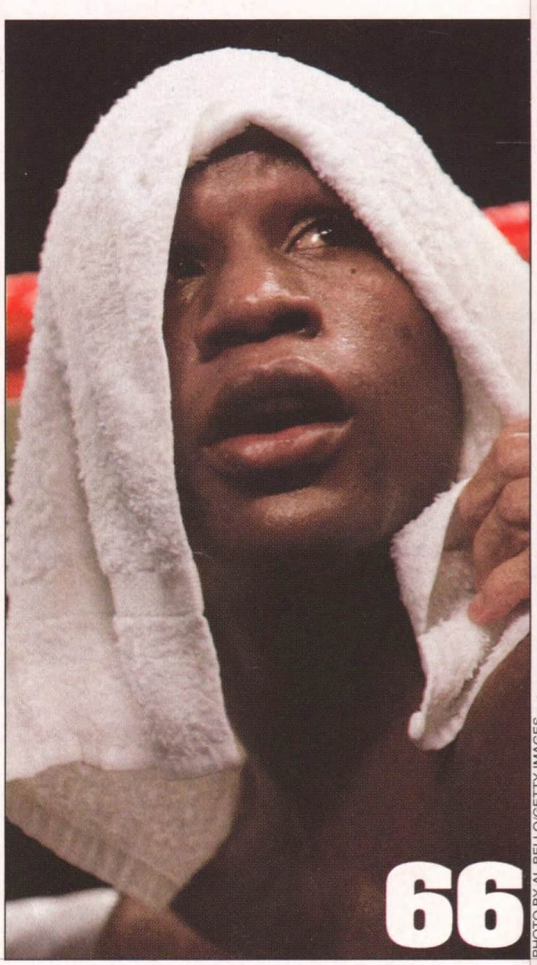

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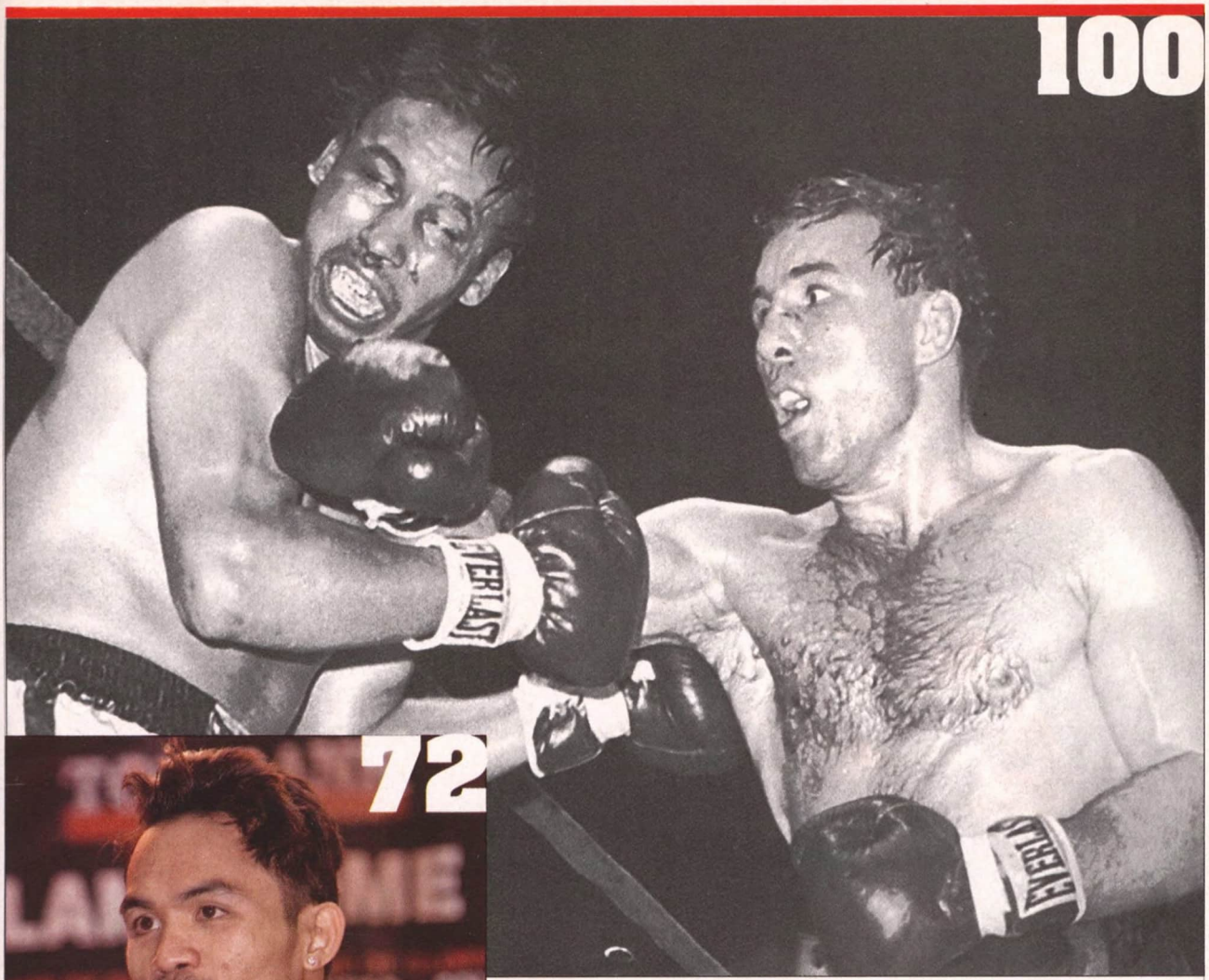

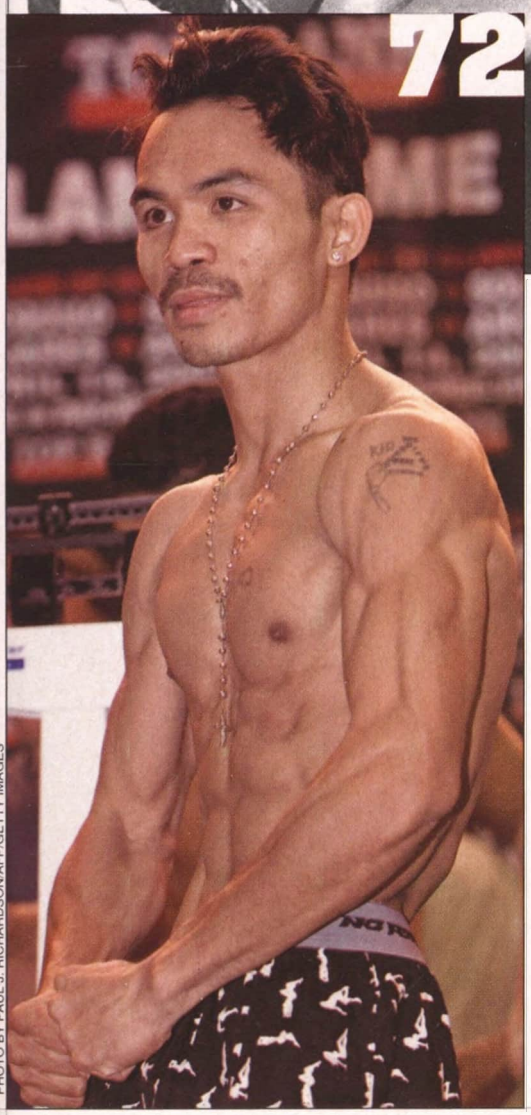

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[Opening Shot]

Feathery Touch

All it took for Rocky Juarez was two losses to Marco Antonio Barrera to convince him that he's better suited to fighting at featherweight than junior light. Left hooks like the one he delivered to the cheekbone of Mexico's Jose Hernandez on the Mayweather-De La Hoya undercard, have a little more impact against 126-pounders. Juarez now has his sights on unbeaten WBA featherweight titlist Chris John.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

Volume 86, No. 9 September 2007

The RING

When the Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya fight turned out pretty much as expected—a close, fast-paced boxing match with plenty of tension but virtually no thrills—it prompted a good deal of soul-searching about ways to make professional boxing more fan-friendly.

Much of the discussion centered on reforming the scoring system: HBO's Larry Merchant insisted that close rounds, when there is little to choose between the fighters, should always go to the aggressor. THE RING's Bill Dettloff advocated a tough stance on clinching, and Joe Koizumi, our longtime Japan correspondent, posted a thoughtful piece on the Internet, where he suggested boxing's popularity is declining because "current scoring standards evaluates slick punching and sly boxers more favorably than game and aggressive punchers."

All of them make valid points, but I believe in most cases the problem starts before the judges mark their scorecards. It begins when a match is made. Matchmaking is an art, not a science, so things certainly don't always work out the way matchmakers hope. But by and large, providing you've seen the fighters in action a couple of times, you're reasonably sure what you're going to get.

It is not rocket science, folks. Pit a cutie such as Cory Spinks against a gun-shy Jermain Taylor, and you're going to get a match that puts the spectators to sleep. Match aggressive powerhitters such as Kelly Pavlik and Edison Miranda, and you'll see a bombs-away slugfest. Put Manny Pacquiao in the ring with damned near any opponent, and you're guaranteed fireworks.

Pac-Man, of course, is an aberration, one of the precious few who entertain regardless of who's in the other corner. Most of the time the styles-make-fights axiom holds true. So why do fights that are virtually destined to be dull get made?

There's no single reason. At the very top level, it's usually all about marketability. Mayweather-De La Hoya didn't shatter all existing box-office records because it promised Gatti-Ward type action. It was about contrasting personalities and hype, the sport's most popular fighter versus the best. Whether or not the fighters had compatible fighting styles was not a consideration.

Then there are dreary matches, such as the recent Zahir Raheem-Cristobal Cruz clinch-a-thon, which are made to fill a low-budget TV spot. With barely enough money available to pay one world-class fighter, there was no chance of being able to afford another, so we got 10 rounds of mind-numbing tedium.

Make no mistake about it: Promoters and television networks will put on damn near anything if they think they can get away with it. It's up to the boxing consumer to keep them in check. If you know, based on past performances by the contestants, that a fight is likely to be stinker, don't watch. It's that simple.

The impact is not quite as direct as back in the day when promoters counted almost exclusively on filling seats to make money. While it's true that television has complicated the situation, the law of supply-and-demand still rules the business world. Withholding your patronage remains the best way to influence the market.

Maybe we do need to think about changing the way fights are scored. Personally, I favor a far more liberal use of the 10-point must system, but several attempts to implement it have failed. We do not, however, need a sweeping change to influence matchmaking. Buying boxing is no different than buying groceries or a new car. All we need is to be educated consumers and apply the power of the pocketbook. You'll be surprised how well it works.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Vincent Bellissima
(215) 643-6385
vbellissima@kappapublishing.com

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT
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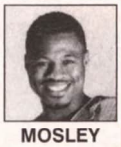

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DIEGO CORRALES, 1977-2007

How fitting it was that Diego Corrales died on an awkward stretch of Las Vegas pavement known as Fort Apache Road. The road's name conjures up images of flaming arrows, Indian battles, and fights to the death; it spoke Diego's language. Now the road can be mentioned along with U.S. Highway 1 in North Carolina, where Jack Johnson crashed his Lincoln Zephyr, and the dark road north of Mexico City where Salvador Sanchez ran his Porsche into the back of a tractor trailer. These innocuous little paths never get our attention except for when they take the lives of our favorite fighters.

Fort Apache Road has long been a subject of controversy in Nevada—it connects two schools with nearby subdivisions, yet has no sidewalk; children walk to school perilously close to traffic. Part of the road is divided into two sides, the west side is public, the east side is private. There's also a freeway transfer ramp that squeezes onto one of the lanes. Car accidents are not unusual there.

On May 7, 2007, exactly two years after he'd beaten Jose Luis Castillo for the lightweight championship, Corrales was riding his new Suzuki GSXR 1000. He was returning home after spending the afternoon with friends. Maybe they'd been partying, reminiscing about the Castillo fight. Or maybe not. Corrales had other things on his mind lately, including tax problems, financial problems, a pregnant wife he was separated from, and the possibility that, after losing his last three contests, he was done as a fighter. Or maybe "Chico" just dropped by to show off his new machine.

Witnesses saw Corrales moving "at a high rate of speed" past the gravel pits that sit adjacent to newly built homes on Fort Apache. He tried to pass a 1997 Honda Accord, and noticed a 2004 Mercedes Benz coming towards him on the other lane. The former champ hit his brakes, but he bumped the back of the Accord; the impact knocked him into the other lane, where he was struck and killed by the Mercedes.

In a way, it took two cars to kill Corrales. That's just the kind of thing he would say too: "It'll take two cars to kill me, bro." He'd grin, and nod his head as if to say, *I'm not joking. I fight till the end.*

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

"Chico" celebrates one of 33 knockout victories

Corrales, 40-5 (33), was truly a fight fan's fighter. He had an exceptional amateur career, turned pro in 1996, won the IBF junior lightweight belt, and at lightweight he owned THE RING and WBC belts. But those who mourned the most for Chico were remembering him not for his fights, but for his personality.

He was a delight to interview, one of those people you can hear smiling on the other end of the phone. His easy manner and sweet nature would have made him a fine ringside commentator.

He had his dark side too. There was a history of drunk driving arrests, and a short prison stay for slugging his first wife. But when asked about his troubles, Corrales wouldn't hide. He'd talk frankly about his early life as a member of a Sacramento street gang, and talk about murders he'd witnessed. It

was so easy to delve into his problematic past that sometimes we forgot to ask about the good stuff; he had five kids, a sixth on the way; he was a gourmet chef. But mostly, he was a fighter.

Dickie Woods, who'd trained Corrales early in his career and again at the end, told PA Sports Ticker, "Diego lived hard and died hard. There was never any second gear with that kid. He climbed mountains, he bungee-jumped, anything that was on the edge the kid just loved. He had bought his new bike before his last fight and we had to keep it away from him until afterwards."

The son of a Colombian father and Mexican mother, Corrales was a beanstalk of a lightweight, standing nearly 6' tall. He decorated his torso with tattoos of panthers and tigers because he felt a kinship with stalkers and predators. His gangly frame concealed the heart of a brawler. He was like a cormorant that thought it was an eagle. He wasn't always graceful, but he could knock your face off with either hand.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The cleanup crew looks over Corrales' wrecked motorcycle

His legend was made on three fights—the first bout with Joel Casamayor, when Chico bled so badly from the mouth that the fight had to be stopped, yet he raged at the ringside physician for daring to stop the action; the night he was behind on points against Acelino Freitas and then pounded him to the canvas three times to win; and, of course, the first bout with Castillo, a bloody miracle of close combat that saw Corrales dropped twice in the 10th round before rising and stopping Castillo for a TKO win. That was the fight contemporary fans will remember as the greatest of their time, a fight where both fighters' faces were beaten into colors we have no name for. It was also the fight that ended Corrales' run, because he was never the same.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

An impromptu tribute to Corrales taped to a post along the road where he died

Some might speculate that Corrales had a death wish. The bike he rode was a firecracker waiting to explode, carrying too much power for a narrow, badly lit road where the speed limit is 35 mph. But you couldn't put Chico on a motorcycle and not expect him to gun it. Investigators suggested he didn't have the experience to handle a motorcycle, but his friends have dismissed that thought; he'd been riding for years.

"It's not like he was down on his boxing career," said family friend Pat Lamparelli. "He was trying to get his personal life in order."

His death was just an accident: too much speed, too much power, too much Chico.

—Don Stradley

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By William Dettloff

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
4/20/07	Mike Marrone W 8 Malachy Farrell	Showtime	h	D	B-	D-
Hey if you hear Chuck Wepner is back in training, this is the fight that did it						
4/20/07	Kendall Holt W 12 Mike Arnaoutis	Showtime	jw	B+	B-	C+
Holt takes Ricardo Torres apart, bet the mortgage on it						
4/25/07	Henry Crawford KO 6 Jeremy Yelton	ESPN2	jm	C	C-	C
If Crawford develops a punch to go with that speed, he's going to be someone to watch						
4/25/07	Jason Litzau W 10 Aldo Valtierra	ESPN2	jl	C+	C-	C
For all his speed and pretty offense, Litzau is still a concussion waiting to happen						
4/27/07	Vernon Paris W 8 Alain Hernandez	ESPN2	jw	C	D+	C
We know it's early, but Paris looks like an outstanding prospect						
4/27/07	Darling Jimenez KO 3 Mike Anchondo	ESPN2	jw	C	B-	C+
Mighty Mike: Richard Simmons called; he wants his chin back						
4/28/07	Juan Diaz KO 8 Acelino Freitas	HBO	l	A-	B-	C+
Think of how much fun this might have been if Freitas still wanted to be a prizefighter						
5/2/07	Fres Oquendo KO 6 Damian Norris	ESPN2	h	C+	D	C+
When did Oquendo grow a set?						
5/2/07	Albert Eromoselle W 10 Yory Boy Campas	ESPN2	m	C+	C	C
Never bet on an old puncher with bangs						
5/4/07	Chris Arreola KO 8 Malcolm Tann	Showtime	h	C	B-	C+
Name three top-10 heavyweights who would have an easy time with Arreola; get comfortable						
5/4/07	Eddie Chambers W 10 Dominick Guinn	Showtime	h	C	B	C+
Eventually, Chambers-Arreola will have to happen						
5/4/07	Panchito Bojado W 10 Dairo Esalas	Telefutura	w	C-	C-	C+
Bojado still hasn't learned how to get out of the way of a right hand; what happened to this kid?						
5/4/07	**Hugo Cazares KO 2 Wilfrido Perez**	**Telefutura**	**world jfl**	**C+**	**D+**	**C-**
This is what it looks like when a guy is in way over his head						
5/5/07	Ray Bautista W 12 Sergio Manuel Medina	HBO PPV	jf	B-	C-	B
If Medina had any sense of balance, this might have been a different story; Bautista far from unbeatable						
5/5/07	Rocky Juarez W 12 Jose Hernandez	HBO PPV	f	B	C+	D+
Was it the anticipation of the main event, or was this just really dull?						
5/8/07	Floyd Mayweather W 12 Oscar De La Hoya	HBO PPV	jm	A+	B-	B
We don't need a rematch; let's see Mayweather-Mosley first						
5/9/07	Adrian Diaconu KO 3 Rico Hoye	ESPN2	lh	B-	B+	B+
Diaconu a whirlwind; get this guy on the tube every month						
5/11/07	Jose Cotto D 12 Prawat Singwangcha	Telefutura	l	B-	B+	B-
So how jealous do you think Jose is of Miguel's left hook?						
5/11/07	Brian Vera W 10 Samuel Miller	ESPN2	sm	C-	B-	C+
We kept waiting for the Miller to show up that Teddy was raving about all night						
5/11/07	Terry Smith W 10 Kelvin Davis	ESPN2	h	C	C+	B-
Good fight, but the fact Davis got out of the first round tells you what you need to know about Smith						
5/16/07	Joel Julio KO 1 Mauro Lucero	ESPN2	jm	C+	D-	F
For perspective, remember that Antonio Diaz stopped Lucero in two rounds eight years ago						
5/16/07	Glen Johnson KO 11 Montell Griffin	ESPN2	lh	B+	B-	B-
Good job by Griffin's corner stopping it; and good for Johnson for forcing them to						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

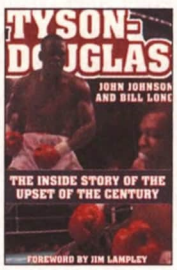
(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net;Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino; Versus

Boxing Bookshelf

Tyson-Douglas: The Inside Story of the Upset of the Century (Potomac Books, 210 pages, hardcover, $25.95) is a quickly told recap of the events leading up to the unforgettable day in Tokyo when Mike Tyson was unmasked by a genial journeyman named Buster Douglas. Along with a round-by-round description of the famous fight, it also chronicles Douglas' short time as a sudden celebrity, offering transcripts of his appearances on various late-night talk shows, including his turn on *Late Night With David Letterman*. Although some of Douglas' friends and entourage are quoted, this book seemed to have been written without any input from Douglas. Hopefully, it will create more interest in a fighter who had an amazing story.



The book is co-written by Ohio author Bill Long and John Johnson, who worked as Douglas' manager and trainer. Referring to Johnson in the third person is an unfortunate style choice, but the book is a nice snapshot of when boxing was still a popular mainstream sport. Buster Douglas proved, at 42-1 odds, that boxing could still provide unexpected thrills for a worldwide audience.

Jim Lampley's perfectly toned introduction is a bonus; if his HBO gig ever runs out, there's a career in print if he wants it.

—Don Stradley

Back in the 1970s, John Cashman, movie critic for *Newsday*'s weekly TV guide, when reviewing the films *Valley Of The Dolls* and *Death Wish*, concluded, respectively, "not the worst movie of all-time, but in there trying all the way," and "if you like this movie, ask yourself why."

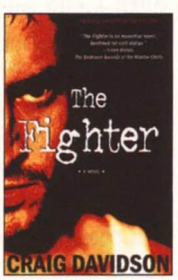
Those same sentiments can be used when referring to Craig Davidson's work of fiction *The Fighter* (Soho Press, 248 pages, $24.00). The book follows the lives of two young men of disparate backgrounds who, due to separate random events, end up facing each other in an illegal, backroom boxing match.

Paul Harris is a 20-something man raised as the privileged son of winery owners, who is forced to examine his self-perceived lack of manhood after suffering a vicious beating outside a restaurant. Harris turns to boxing, and steroids, as a way to find his masculinity, but ends up craving pain as if it was an addiction. Okay, we get it; it's the old cliché that man cannot truly know himself and his limits unless he challenges himself physically.

Rob Tully is a 16-year-old standout amateur fighter born into a family of fighters, namely his father and uncle, who see the Sweet Science as Rob's ticket to a better life. Through a series of events, some tragic, Harris and Tully end up meeting in an off-the-radar fight held in an Ontario barn, eerily reminiscent of any Jean-Claude Van Damme movie.

How they got there is a story the author portrays in unsettling detail. His description of physical injury and appearance are too often clichéd and, worse, downright disgusting, to the point that the reader will think Davidson gets his thrills painting nauseating word pictures. Indeed, one scene in which Harris has sex with his father's secretary is so graphic that it reads like a cheap porn novel.

The book, with its overt portrayal of bodily functions, wounds, and the underground world of fighting, is an effort that only the twisted mind of Quentin Tarantino or a fan of the book/movie *Fight Club* could possibly enjoy. And Davidson's use of fictional boxing characters, such as a Buffalo-area heavyweight named Mesi and a former heavyweight named Fritzie Zivic, shows a serious lack of originality and is insulting to any truly knowledgeable boxing fan.



The Fighter is to be avoided at all costs. Stay away; stay very far away.

—Mike Greenhill

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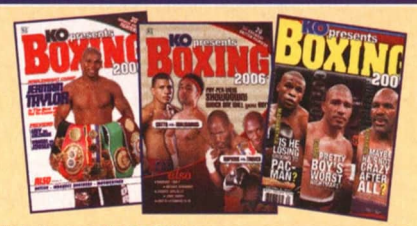

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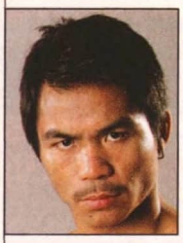
Outside the Ropes

Filipino superstar **Manny Pacquiao** was soundly beaten by opponent **Darlene Antonino-Custodio** in their race for the congressional seat of South Cotabato, the boxer's home district. At first, Pac-Man was reluctant to accept the result, but finally conceded defeat. It appears, however, that he might have lost more than an election. "Manny's complaining that several of his trusted confidants funneled tons of campaign cash right to their own pockets," reported **Ted Lerner**, THE RING's Philippines correspondent ... Hollywood director **James Toback** will direct a documentary about former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson**, using material from more than 30 hours of interviews with the ex-champ. "The point is not to polish his image or make a cinematic apology, but rather to get a firsthand look at a very complex and epic story," said Toback. "He was honest about all the things that have highlighted his life" ... Legendary Philadelphia middleweight **Bennie Briscoe** was inducted into the Pennsylvania Boxing Hall of Fame in mid-May. Briscoe is widely considered one of the greatest fighters to never win a world championship ... Former WBA heavyweight titleholder **Greg Page**, 48, has settled a lawsuit filed against the **Kentucky Athletic Commission** for $1.2-million. In his suit, Page, who suffered brain damage in a 2001 fight with **Dale Crowe** in Erlanger, Kentucky, alleged that there was no ambulance or appropriate medical personnel at the fight. The state admitted no liability in the settlement ... Massachusetts Superior Court Judge **Peter W. Agnes Jr.** dismissed a breach of contract suit against former WBA junior middleweight titleholder **Jose Antonio Rivera**, 34, by his former manager, **Steven J. Tankanow**. Judge Agnes cited the six-year statute of limitations on breach of contract claims and state boxing regulations in his order to dismiss ... WBC woman's featherweight titleholder **Sharon Anyos** has relinquished the title because she is expecting twins. "I'll retire as world champion, have the babies, and then come back," said Anyos ... Former IBF light heavyweight and WBA cruiserweight titleholder **Bobby Czyz**, 45, was pulled unconscious from the back seat of a burning car in mid-April and flown by helicopter to the Jersey Shore Medical Center in Neptune, New Jersey. Czyz has since been moved to another health care facility. Apparently, the car in which Czyz was traveling went off the road and hit a tree. The New Jersey State police are still investigating the accident ... Three-division former titleholder **Hector Camacho** was sent to Harrison County (Mississippi) Adult Detention Center after pleading guilty to a 2004 burglary of a computer store. The 45-year-old Camacho faces up to seven years in prison and a fine of up to $10,000 ... Former HBO Chairman and CEO **Chris Albrecht**, 54, who resigned in the wake of his arrest outside of the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, where he was attending the **Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya** fight, pleaded no-contest to misdemeanor battery and received a six-month suspended sentence and a year of unsupervised probation. He also agreed to pay $1,000 fine and undergo domestic violence counseling. Albrecht blamed the incident on having resumed drinking after being "a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous for 13 years." This was not the first time Albrecht has been involved in a violent episode involving a woman. In 1991, HBO corporate parent Time Warner Inc. paid a settlement of more than $400,000 to **Sasha Emerson**, Albrecht's subordinate and former lover, who accused him of throwing her out of a chair and choking her ... Authorities in Berlin, Germany, have initiated preliminary proceedings against trainer **Ulli Wegner** and ring doctor **Walter Wagner** on the pretext of a law against bodily harm by omission. The case stems from the IBF middleweight title bout between **Arthur Abraham**, who is trained by Wegner, and **Edison Miranda** that took place in Wetzlar, Germany, on September 23, 2006, in which Abraham won a 12-round decision despite suffering a broken jaw in the fourth round. The proceedings were initiated because Wegner and Wagner didn't stop the fight when it became clear that Abraham's jaw was broken. "The whole thing is absurd," said Wegner ... **Johnny Tapia**, 40, pleaded guilty to felony drug possession in a case resulting from a March 2007 incident, when the boxer was taken to Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico, after being found unresponsive in a hotel room due to a cocaine overdose. Tapia will serve no jail time, but will receive 18 months probation. He also agreed to immediately enter a drug treatment program ... Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, amateur coach **James Deoria**, 53, died of pancreatic cancer on May 13. His son, lightweight **Jimmy Deoria**, fought professionally from 1990 to '96, compiling a 20-7 (8) record.



Pacquiao: Loses election

Briscoe: Honored in Philly

Czyz: Injured in car wreck

Tapia: No jail time

Quotable

"Roy Jones said he'd fight me for $5-million. Who's going to give Roy $5-million at this point? Nobody. That's his way of saying I'm not going to fight the kid."

*—WBC light heavyweight titlist Chad Dawson, explaining to **Hartford Courant** writer Jeff Jacobs why he won't be fighting Jones*

"The fighters just don't get what they deserve, you know? People are still asking today, why don't they have a pension for the fighters? Everybody looks at the fighters like a piece of meat."

—Former WBC light heavyweight and WBA cruiserweight titleholder Dwight Muhammad Qawi, telling Rob Scott of doghouseboxing.com why he's bitter about the fight game

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended May 21, 2007

"The Bible Of Boxing"

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: Adrian Diaconu cracks the top 10, after an impressive third-round stoppage of Rico Hoye. Roy Jones, previously number eight, exits due to inactivity, with Julio Gonzalez (ninth) and Hugo Gary (10th last issue) each moving up one place.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: Kelly Pavlik surges from nine to three after wiping out Edison Miranda in seven rounds. Miranda (third last issue) bumps down one slot to four, moving down everyone from four to eight one place each.
Junior Middleweights: No changes.
Welterweights: No changes.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior Featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: No changes.
Junior Bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior Flyweights: A slight change at the bottom, as Omar Salado (ninth last issue) switches with Jose Aguirre (eighth last issue), based on Salado's recent victory over Gilberto Keb Baas and Aguirre's ninth-round stoppage loss to top-rated Ulises Solis, whom Salado fought to a 12-round draw in August 2006.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-For-Pound: A major shakeup here. Middleweight world champion Jermain Taylor falls from six to 10 after his split-decision victory over the smaller Cory Spinks (first at junior middleweight) in May. Taylor has decision victories over Spinks and Kassim Ouma, two undersized fighters who were stepping up to 160 for the first time, and a draw against Winky Wright. Though Taylor is 2-0-1 in his last three outings, he simply hasn't looked like the sixth-best fighter in the world. Taylor's demotion moves everyone from seven to 10 (Bernard Hopkins, Joe Calzaghe, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Ricky Hatton) up one place each.

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight/Junior Middleweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
6. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
7. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
8. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
9. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Jermain Taylor**
    Middleweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended May 21, 2007

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

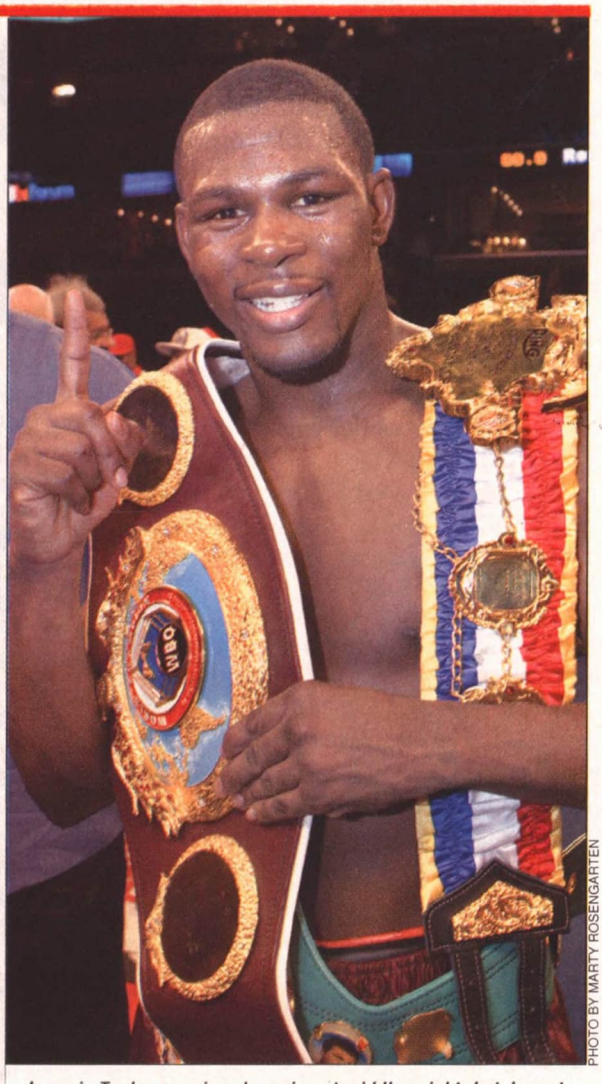


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Jermain Taylor remains champion at middleweight, but drops to 10th pound-for-pound

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 48-3 (43)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 23-0-1 (17)
5. **SHANNON BRIGGS** Brooklyn, NY 48-4-1 (42)
6. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 46-1 (34)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
9. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-6-3 (43)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-7-1 (28)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 35-2-1 (22)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
5. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-3-1 (15)
6. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
7. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 38-2 (28)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-0 (19)
9. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
10. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 39-0-1 (20)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
3. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 20-2-1 (13)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 26-0-1 (19)
5. **NICKY COOK** England 27-0 (15)
6. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
7. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 27-7-3 (10)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 23-3-1 (12)
9. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 59-5-1 (37)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 28-3 (19)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: RAFAEL MARQUEZ Mexico 37-3 (33)

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 26-2 (18)
2. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 41-4 (31)
3. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 29-1-2 (19)
4. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 49-2-1 (40)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 31-1 (28)
6. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 23-0 (18)
7. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 28-1 (16)
8. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
9. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 23-0 (9)
10. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-3 (17)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 22-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 55-3-2 (40)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-2 (6)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 20-2 (16)
5. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 34-5 (29)
6. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 67-9 (44)
7. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-5 (20)
8. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
9. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 27-1 (18)
10. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 19-1-1 (7)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 33-3 (22)

1. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 37-1 (27)
3. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-1 (10)
4. **DAVID HAYE**
England 19-1 (18)
5. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 23-0-1 (16)
6. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 26-1 (20)
7. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 26-3-1 (18)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 18-0 (13)
9. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 16-0 (12)
10. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 21-5 3(18)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 26-0 (16)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 24-4 (18)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 45-11-2 (30)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 24-0 (15)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 31-1 (21)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
8. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 28-2 (15)
10. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 43-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 28-3 (22)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 24-1 (18)
6. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 19-0 (16)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 21-0 (17)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 23-1 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 30-0 (23)
10. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 22-2-2 (14)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 27-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 22-0 (17)
3. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 31-0 (28)
4. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 28-2 (24)
5. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 27-2 (12)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (41)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 20-0 (14)
8. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-9 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 25-2 (11)
10. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (4)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 34-4 (24)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-4 (37)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 29-0 (24)
4. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 43-10-6 (13)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
6. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 27-1 (25)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 31-2 (19)
9. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)
10. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 32-0 (24)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 42-0 (30)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 55-7-1 (47)
2. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 35-1-2 (20)
3. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-2-1 (18)
4. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 44-8-1 (29)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-1-1 (20)
6. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
7. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 26-0-1 (10)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 22-1 (12)
9. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 15-1 (9)
10. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Germany 27-2-1 (12)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 32-0 (16)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-3 (25)
3. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 32-1-1 (17)
4. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 30-5-1 (24)
5. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 24-1-1 (14)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-4 (29)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 24-2 (13)
9. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 22-0 (20)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 18-2 (12)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 44-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 47-3-1 (35)
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-5 (42)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 27-0 (17)
5. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-5 (34)
6. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 22-0 (22)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
8. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 41-5-2 (25)
9. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)
10. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 24-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 31-2 (17)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 30-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 9-1 (5)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 31-3-2 (12)
5. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
6. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 33-2-1 (24)
7. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 46-4-1 (35)
8. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-6 (20)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-2 (12)
10. **PRAMUANSAK POSUWAN**
Thailand 36-1-1 (20)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 65-2 (34)
2. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 28-0 (22)
3. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 24-0-2 (15)
4. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-1 (17)
5. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 30-4-1 (15)
6. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 21-2 (8)
7. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 36-1-1 (28)
8. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 30-2-2 (19)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 14-0 (10)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: HUGO CAZARES
Mexico 25-3-1 (19)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 24-1-2 (18)
2. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 20-5-1 (16)
3. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 38-4-1 (30)
4. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
5. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 27-5 (14)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
7. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-2 (12)
8. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 16-0-2 (8)
9. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-6-1 (20)
10. **MUNETSUGU KAYO**
Japan 15-2 (8)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 21-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-5-5 (31)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 17-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-3 (7)
6. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-1 (18)
7. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 23-1-1 (13)
8. **PORNSAWAN KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 18-0 (14)
9. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 23-0 (8)
10. **RONALD BARRERA**
Colombia 20-3-1 (12)

By Jeff Ryan

Ugly Boy Floyd

Frankly, we've had enough of the gangsta element in sports to last us a lifetime. ESPN newscasts have made sure of that. Tune them on and there's plenty of what the apologists behind the anchor desk euphemistically refer to as "edginess" and "attitude." Score a touchdown and you might not make that night's taped highlights. Glare menacingly at the defensive back you beat, taunt the enemy fans, and give the referee an earful of abuse on your way back to the sidelines, though, and your clip will probably lead off the show.

Then, of course, there's *ESPN, The Magazine*, another outlet all too anxious to deliver what the twentysomething male demographic craves. Just about every cover it produces looks like a wanted poster from the post office. If Johnny Unitas was playing today, you get the impression he'd be posed with 10 pounds of jewelry around his neck, a tough-guy sneer on his face, a design shaved into the side of his crew cut, and his throwing hand flashing a gang sign.

That's why Floyd Mayweather's decision to assume the role of villain during the build-up to his clash with Oscar De La Hoya was so frustrating to watch. Had this been 10 years ago, maybe "Pretty Boy's" thug act would have had some shock value. But this is the era of Ray Lewis and Pacman Jones, of guys ending up dead or paralyzed when NFL players hit town to party. It's the era of Ron Artest and Sebastian Telfair, when athletes brawl with the crowd or try to carry guns onto airplanes. Mayweather's shtick wasn't unique or hip. It was just lame and repetitive. Not to mention a reinforcing of the stereotype of the young, rich, black athlete as arrogant and disrespectful.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Gangsta image not helping "Pretty Boy Floyd"

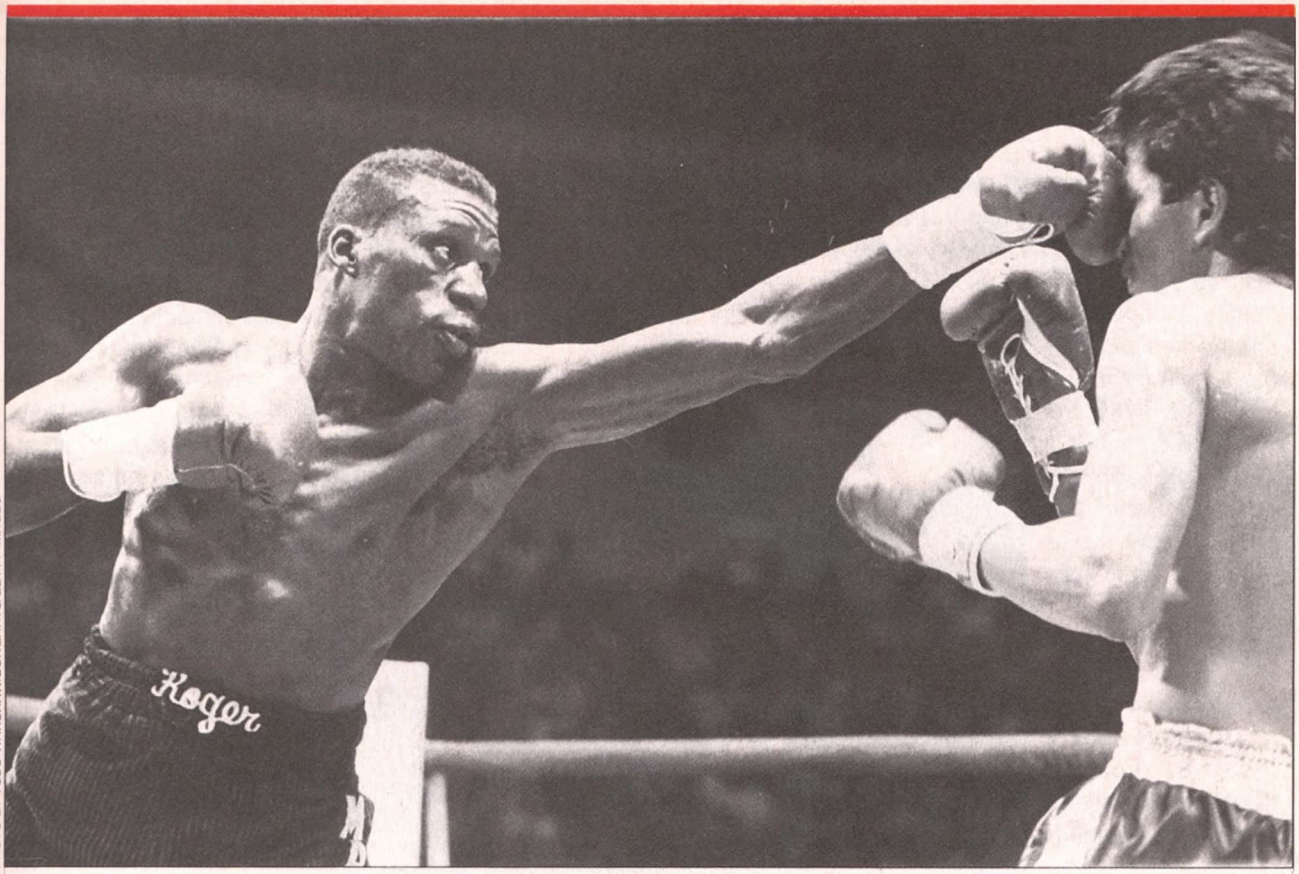


PHOTO BY TODD WARSHAW/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

The original "Mexican Killer" does his thing versus Rene Arrendondo in 1987

This was Mayweather's moment to gleam. His career-defining bout was about to unfold and he had the chance to join De La Hoya on the high road. Instead, he took an off-ramp into an underground tunnel. The HBO reality show, *24/7*, revealed Mayweather to be an idiot around the clock. He showed off how much money he had by stacking piles of it on a table and then arrogantly flinging hundred-dollar bills at the television camera. He got in De La Hoya's face at press conferences and tried to provoke confrontations. No matter what setting he was in, Pretty Boy unleashed the f-word with such regularity, a CussStat computer would have been required to keep count. Basically, he came across as a punk.

No, Pretty Boy wasn't waving a gun or traveling with a posse seeking mayhem. But he wasn't exactly bringing grace and honor to the title of Best Fighter in the World, either. He adopted the foolish notion that there must always be "a good guy and a bad guy." As HBO's Jim Lampley put it, Mayweather gets a kick out of being disliked. Mayweather capped off his dumb behavior by wearing a sombrero and the colors of the Mexican flag into the ring for Cinco de Mayo. Too bad the idea wasn't even original. His uncle, Roger, had donned the same headwear years ago when he earned the nickname, "The Mexican Assassin," for his string of victories over opponents from south of the border.

It will be interesting to see what kinds of sales figures Mayweather generates with his next pay-per-view outing, which is guaranteed (barring a rematch) to come against a foe who is far less of a draw than De La Hoya is. Traditionally, ticket-buyers only like thugs who can back up the boorish behavior with brutal displays of destruction. Sonny Liston, a young George Foreman, Roberto Duran, and Mike Tyson were stars because they were jerks who knocked opponents flat, not because they were jerks. Following up his endless trash talk and badass attitude with a no-knockdown split decision and an immediate (albeit insincere) retirement announcement, isn't likely to have earned Mayweather an army of new followers.

Better luck next time when it comes to recruiting new fans, Floyd. Just keep those F-bombs and flying Benjamins coming.

BOXING, SANS DIEGO: If Diego Corrales was going to die on a ribbon of pavement, it was going to be by crashing a souped-up motorcycle in Las Vegas while trying to pass a car at high speed and certainly not by rolling over a station wagon at 20 m.p.h. in Branson, Missouri. "Chico" died the way he fought: going full throttle, fearing nothing, and assuming that if he ever went down, he'd somehow find a way to get to his feet.

Corrales' demise quickly loses that romantic, James Dean-like quality, however, when we're reminded that he was the husband of a pregnant wife, the father of five other children, and a young man who, at age 29, may have been running out of boxing years but had decades of family outings, desert sunsets, and rich reminiscing still ahead of him.

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from a guy who must be missing a few brain cells to some other Gray matter:

•Now that Evander Holyfield has discovered the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation is friendly to 44-year-old fighters who have taken far too many punches in their careers and are suspected of having used performance-enhancing drugs, it's little wonder that the ex-champ has become more of a fixture in "The Lone Star State" than The Alamo. Is it my imagination? Or has "The Real Deal" performed in Texas more often than Toby Keith?

•Here, in only 14 words, is exactly what's wrong with sports coverage in the U.S.: Football troublemaker Pacman Jones gets a hundred times more media attention than Pac-Man Pacquiao.

•Trainer Emanuel Steward told the *New York Post* that cooking meals for his middleweight champ, Jermain Taylor, merely continues a long culinary tradition that has seen him serve as a chef for Hearns, Holyfield, Michael Moorer, Lennox Lewis, and others. Steward then went on to explain that he makes country rolls from scratch and is careful to not put too much sugar in his yams. Sounds like Emeril Lagasse and Rachael Ray are lucky "The Wizard of Kronk" doesn't have time to fit a cooking show on The Food Network into his busy schedule.

•Considering that he makes his living in the ever-suspect sport of boxing, Amir Khan ought to consider changing the spelling of his name to A Mere Con.

•During the flap over radio personality Don Imus' firing for insensitive remarks about a women's college basketball team, one New York columnist compared Reverend Al Sharpton's verbal battering of Imus on a radio show they appeared on together to Muhammad Ali's pounding on Jerry Quarry. Is *that* the best boxing mismatch reference a columnist could come up with? Gee, maybe the guy ought to pick up a copy of THE RING every 15 years or so.

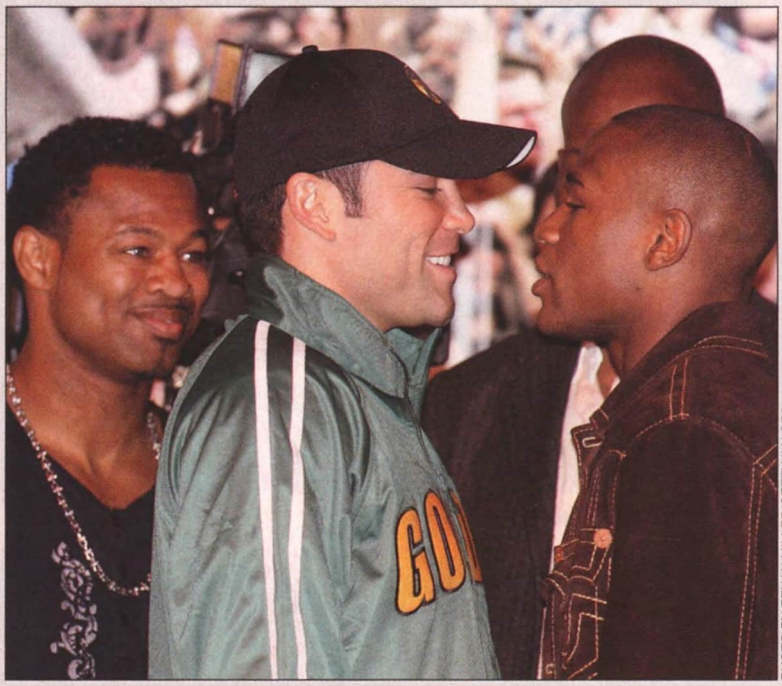


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Maybe Mosley can be more than a bystander next time

•My order of preference for Mayweather's future opponents: 1) Miguel Cotto, 2) Winky Wright, 3) Antonio Margarito, 4) Shane Mosley. Please note that Felix Trinidad isn't anywhere on the list.

•Hallelujah! Following Nicolay Valuev's loss to Ruslan Chagaev, we no longer have to read the names Valuev and Rocky Marciano in the same paragraph anymore. Hey, Ruslan, the next time you come to New York, the first 10 drinks are on me.

•Wouldn't you have liked to been there when Don King met Pope Benedict XVI in March? It's probably safe to assume that the little matter of King's conviction for manslaughter never came up during their conversation.

This is another one of those cases where we wish the man and the fighter were two completely different people, but they weren't. If only Duran could have been more outgoing with the press during his career. If only Tyson could have been a nicer guy away from the battlefield. If only Corrales, skydiver/motorcyclist/deep-sea diver, could have been more cautious. The truth is if those guys were different outside the ring, they surely wouldn't have been the same warriors we loved inside of it. And Corrales sure was a warrior to love.

I've always had an appreciation for the powerhitter. But having grown up tall and thin, I've particularly admired the tall and thin puncher, that fistic skinny man who looked like he'd be chopped in half by the first left hook that landed to his ribs, but who possessed enough pop to wobble an elephant. I'm talking about a welterweight Tommy Hearns. "The Explosive Thin Man," Alexis Arguello. Bob Foster. Michael Spinks. Sandy Saddler. Jeff Chandler. Carlos Zarate. And even, though they didn't share the same level of talent as the aforemen-

tioned greats, fighters like Roger Mayweather and Mark Breland. They may have all had chicken chests, but those guys got to puff them out proudly more often than not on the walk back to the dressing room.

So, too, did Corrales. His record showed three defeats in a row by the time he was killed, but it was inevitable that a fighter who'd always run toward tough battles and dangerous opponents, rather than away from them, would wear out all of a sudden. Maybe Corrales shouldn't have fought Jose Luis Castillo when Castillo showed up for their rematch overweight. That was, after all, the loss that began Chico's downfall. But Corrales wasn't about to fear anyone, especially a guy he'd previously rallied to knock out with one of the most incredible displays of grit we've ever seen.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Corrales celebrates his incredible come-from-behind kayo of Castillo

Serving time in prison for beating his previous wife, who was pregnant at the time, reminds us that Corrales can be referred to at best as a *personable*, but never as a *nice*, guy. And speeding (without a motorcycle license or even a valid Nevada driver's license in his possession) on the night he was killed was an incredibly irresponsible and selfish thing for a father to do. No, Diego Corrales was no role model. But he played a model role for a few fun years in the junior lightweight and lightweight ranks: Brazen gladiator who truly believed his power, heart, and feeling of invincibility guaranteed him surviving any predicament.

It's not surprising that he crashed in Las Vegas, only that he didn't live to crash again.

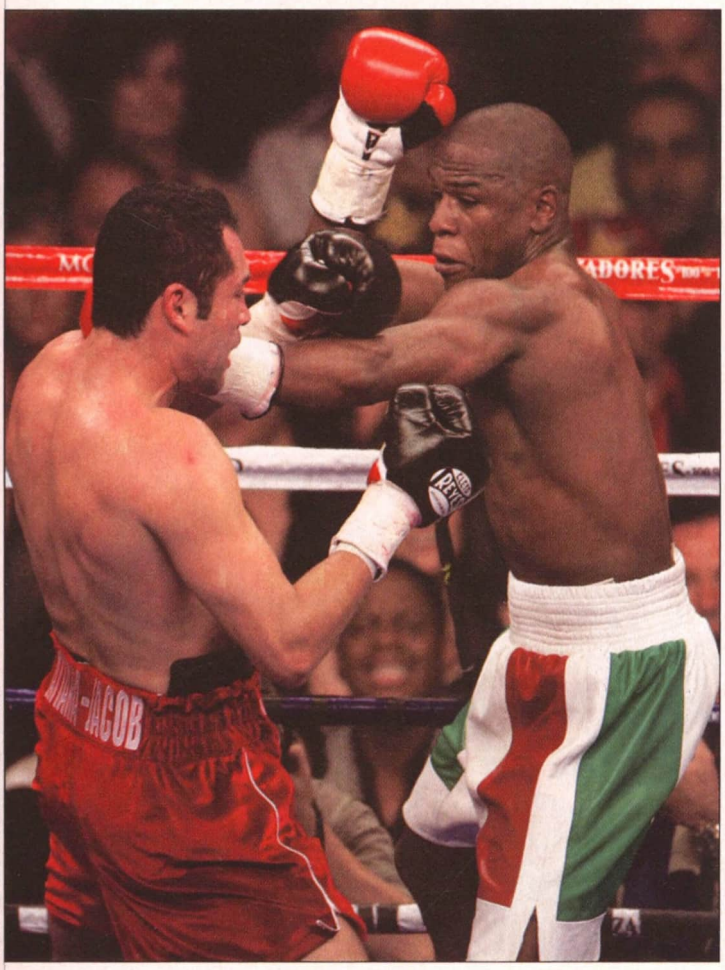


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

"Meriwether" should have aimed a few jabs at so-called experts

SPARE US YOUR, UH, WISDOM: It's great when a superfight like Mayweather-De La Hoya is intriguing enough to command the attention of the mainstream. The flipside, however, is that a bunch of media gasbags who wouldn't know a standing eight-count from a standing puddle of sweat suddenly feel it's their obligation to give us their take on the Sweet Science, no matter how uninformed they are.

One such know-it-all, Mike Francesa, co-host of the highly rated *Mike And The Mad Dog* radio show on New York's WFAN, provided his "expert" analysis two days after the battle, all the while referring to the winner of the bout as "Meriwether." Too bad my radio doesn't have a remote control. It took me about two seconds to reach over and change the dial, but that's twice as long as I would have liked. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Look Who Swung Hatchet At Merchant

Though his contract wasn't renewed by HBO, Larry Merchant had become a flesh-and-blood stamp of endorsement whose presence defines a boxing event as worthy in some way. There's no one else right now you could say that about, even though plenty of good boxing commentators are out there. Merchant's replacement, Max Kellerman, is one of them, but Merchant is unique, a Howard Cosell-like fixture.

When I said that to Merchant, he cracked, "I guess when you've been around 29 years you become a fixture."

After parting from boxing's flagship TV network, he won't be gone from boxing. "I probably will turn up somewhere else," he said. "There's also a chance I will try to write a book first. I'm sending out feelers and waiting for something that will excite me, something that gets me to say, 'Yeah, I wanna do that.'"

Merchant's departure is loaded with irony because HBO's top suit, Chris Albrecht, who signed the hatchet, was himself fired shortly afterward due to an ugly incident in Las Vegas. Police arrested Albrecht on suspicion of publicly assaulting his girlfriend only hours after the network's hugely successful Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya pay-per-view extravaganza.

Arresting officers said they ran to the rescue when they spotted Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Albrecht, 54, choking and dragging his companion out-

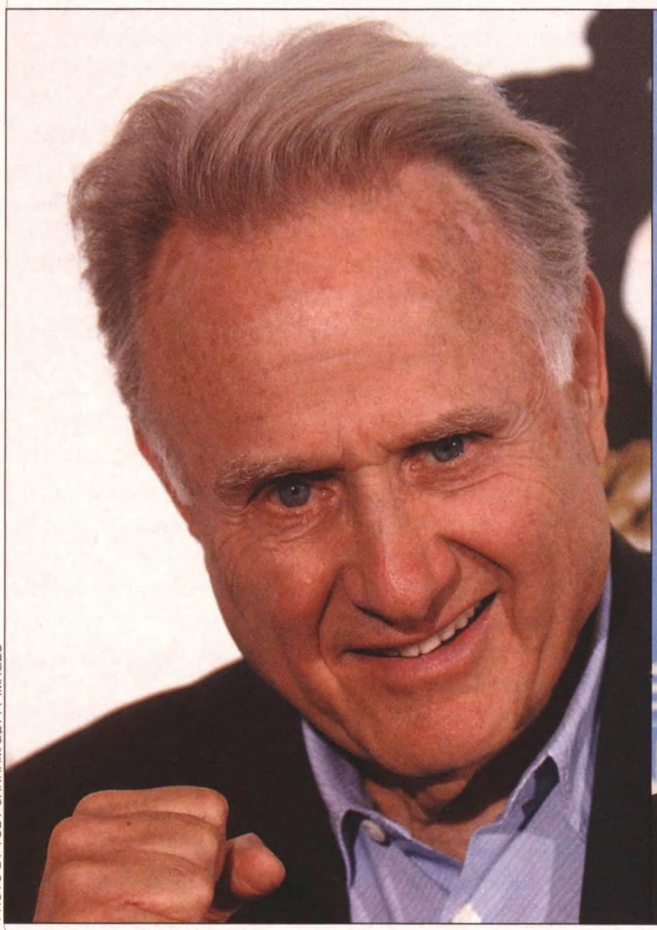


PHOTO BY TOBY CANHAM/GETTY IMAGES

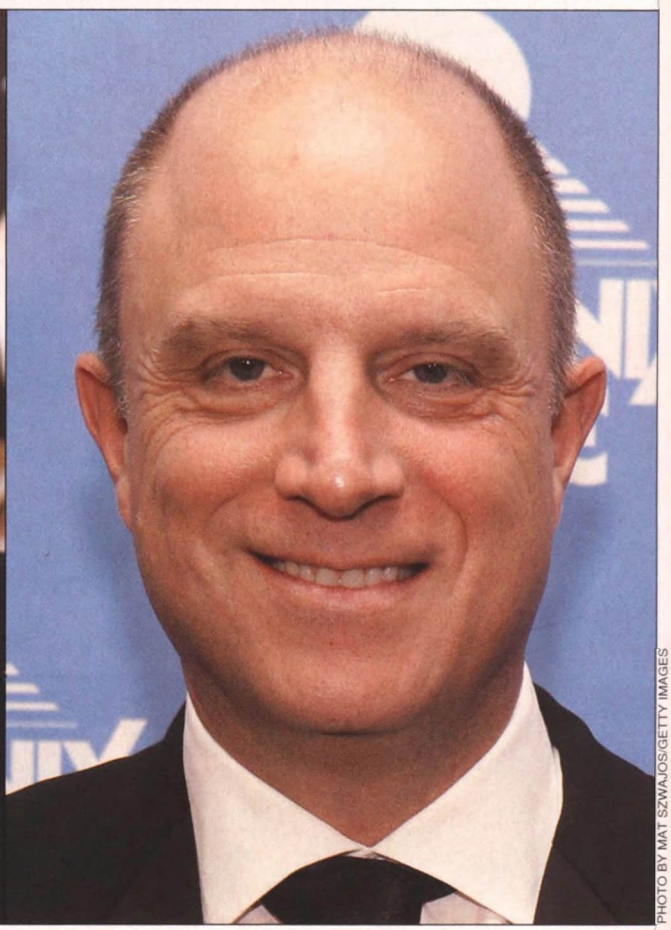


PHOTO BY MAT SZWAJOS/GETTY IMAGES

Merchant (left) and Albrecht leave HBO under radically different circumstances

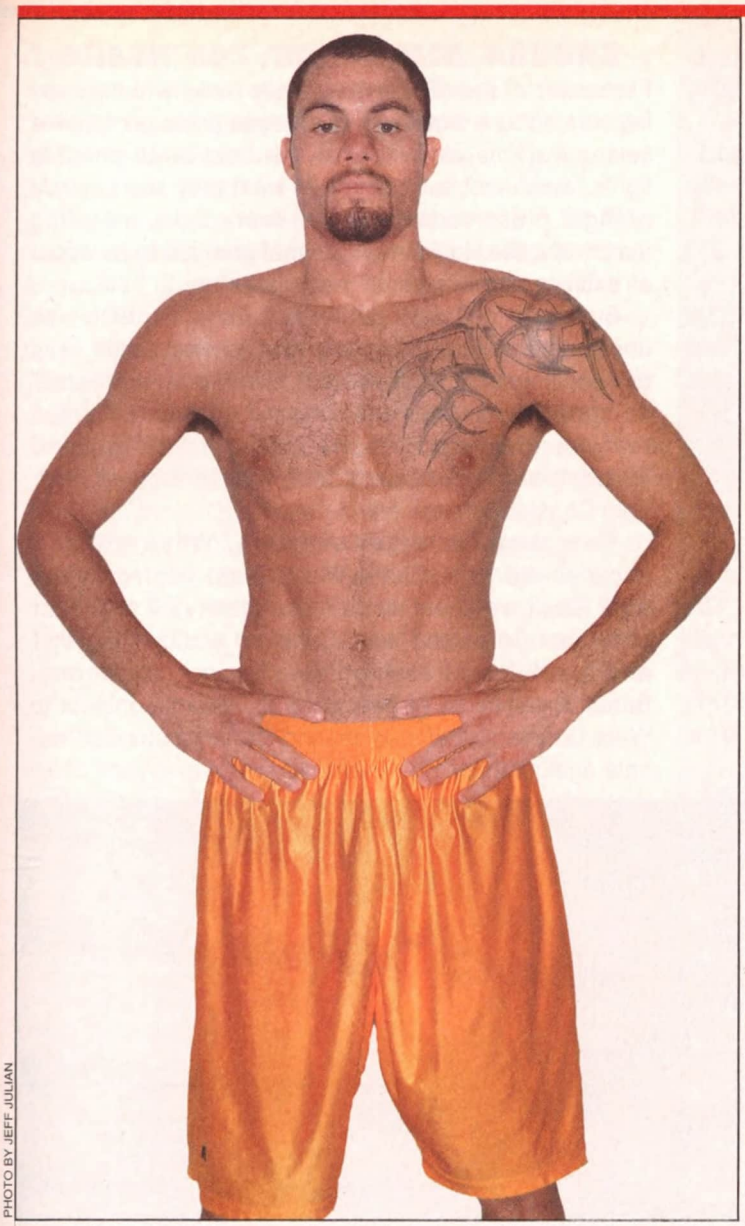


PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

Cintron isn't afraid to grapple with UFC champ

side the MGM Grand and that they had to physically break his grip around her throat. Now it turns out that in 1991, according to *The Los Angeles Times*, HBO paid out a sum somewhere above $400,000 to an ex-girlfriend of Albrecht's who alleged he shoved and choked her in HBO's Los Angeles office. Both women were HBO employees. It's a shame Merchant could no longer measure up to the classy Albrecht's standards of charm and decency.

In TV, when executives screw up, they look for a miracle by changing the talent, but as sociologist Margaret Mead liked to point out, change is not necessarily progress. After CBS replaced solid Bob Schieffer with cutesy Katie Couric last year, it fell flat on its corporate face, driving viewers to other network news shows.

If HBO was unhappy with its fight ratings, it might have examined policies that sent a full crew to Germany for Wladimir Klitschko against plodding Ray Austin, but failed to snap up a terrific card featuring Manny Pacquiao against Jorge Solis, forcing Top Rank to organize both the promotion and the pay-per-view telecast on its own.

HBO showed it knows how to deliver dollars to big events when it snared 2.15 million buys and $120-million in broadcast revenue for Mayweather-De La Hoya, thanks to its creative prefight publicity. Both numbers were record-breakers. But for 55 bucks a pop, the network and Golden Boy Promotions should also have delivered the sort of hot co-features Top Rank provided on that Pacquiao-Solis card. What we got instead felt like plastic spoons in a gourmet restaurant.

CHOKING CINTRON BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH: I like the spirit and pizzazz of welterweight Kermit Cintron, who offered to get into a cage with UFC lightweight champion Sean, "The Muscle Shark," Sherk. The Shark, of course, would try to choke Cintron or bend one of his joints back the wrong way before Cintron bashes him all the way to Queer Street. I like Cintron's chances, but I'm not sure he ought to lower himself figuratively into a cage with mixed martial arts, which are, after all, only another symptom of the dumbing down of our culture. Fans unable to appreciate the subtleties of the Sweet Science feel a little smarter watching UFC. They can grasp the situation when a fighter sits on another fighter's chest and rains fists and elbows on his face.

Back in the 1970s, all-time great jazzman Miles Davis was shoved into a lesser role by the force of rock 'n' roll. Davis' towering genius was too sophisticated for much of the impatient world around him. So he traded his impeccably tailored suits for psychedelic garb and hired electric rockers to play behind him. But the results were less than spectacular. I'm not implying all jazz musicians are superior to rockers, just as not all boxers are more talented than mixed-martial artists. But jazz and boxing are higher callings that impose tougher standards. So why should Cintron serve up hamburger when he's got T-bone in the fridge?

MY SEAT IN UZBEKISTAN: Not only did Oscar lose another superfight, but once again the guy who beat him won't become the next Oscar. If Shane Mosley, with his crowd-pleasing style, couldn't attract glitterati and Level 10 world-wide attention, what chance does careful, careful Floyd Mayweather have? Besides, the fight biz can't hitch its wagon to the Mayweather star if Mayweather's going to keep retiring after every fight.

Mayweather employs a big entourage to tell him he's the greatest ever, and he is in fact quick as lightning, a

magnificent boxer, and an extraordinary defensive technician. But even in this category, he's almost certainly inferior to the great Willie Pep.

And how many people have heard of Pep? Readers of this magazine, sure. But the general public knows about Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray I and II. That's the category Mayweather claims for himself, and he's not there—not even close.

But forget all that. As I've pointed out in past columns, what's really important about these big events is not the fight itself—it's whether or not I get a good seat. I didn't. In fact, to properly describe the cruel joke of a seat provided by Golden Boy and its errand boys at Magna Media, I'd need the help of the late, great Rodney Dangerfield. I'll try to go it alone anyway:

I was so far up in the stands several of us roped ourselves together before making the climb. Goats grazed up there. Tribesmen smuggled opium poppies. The fighters down below looked like performers in a flea circus. Binoculars were useless. We were in need of something more along the lines of the Hubble Telescope. And I could barely even see my boss, Nigel Collins, waving to me from the fourth row.

ENOUGH BICKERING: I ran into Bernard Fernandez of the *Philadelphia Daily News* and maxboxing.com doing a slow burn at a Vegas press conference selling Hopkins vs. Wright as the best of all possible fights, which, not surprisingly, is what they say at every prefight press conference for every fight, including match-ups like Hopkins-Wright that promise to be about as exciting as white bread with margarine.

But that's not what bothered Fernandez, who was uncharacteristically indignant. Why, he wondered, was this contest set in Vegas? "Isn't it an East Coast fight?" he complained. After checking my atlas, I confirmed that, sure enough, St. Petersburg, Florida, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, are, just as Bernard said, East Coast locations.

This raises a larger question: When will this decades-old East Coast-West Coast boxing rivalry end? Can't we show just a little maturity? It's time for fans, East Coast and West Coast, to sit down together and break bread as brothers. No more bickering. Bernard, just because East Coast fighters are inferior to West Coasters, that's no reason for Vegas to discriminate against them.

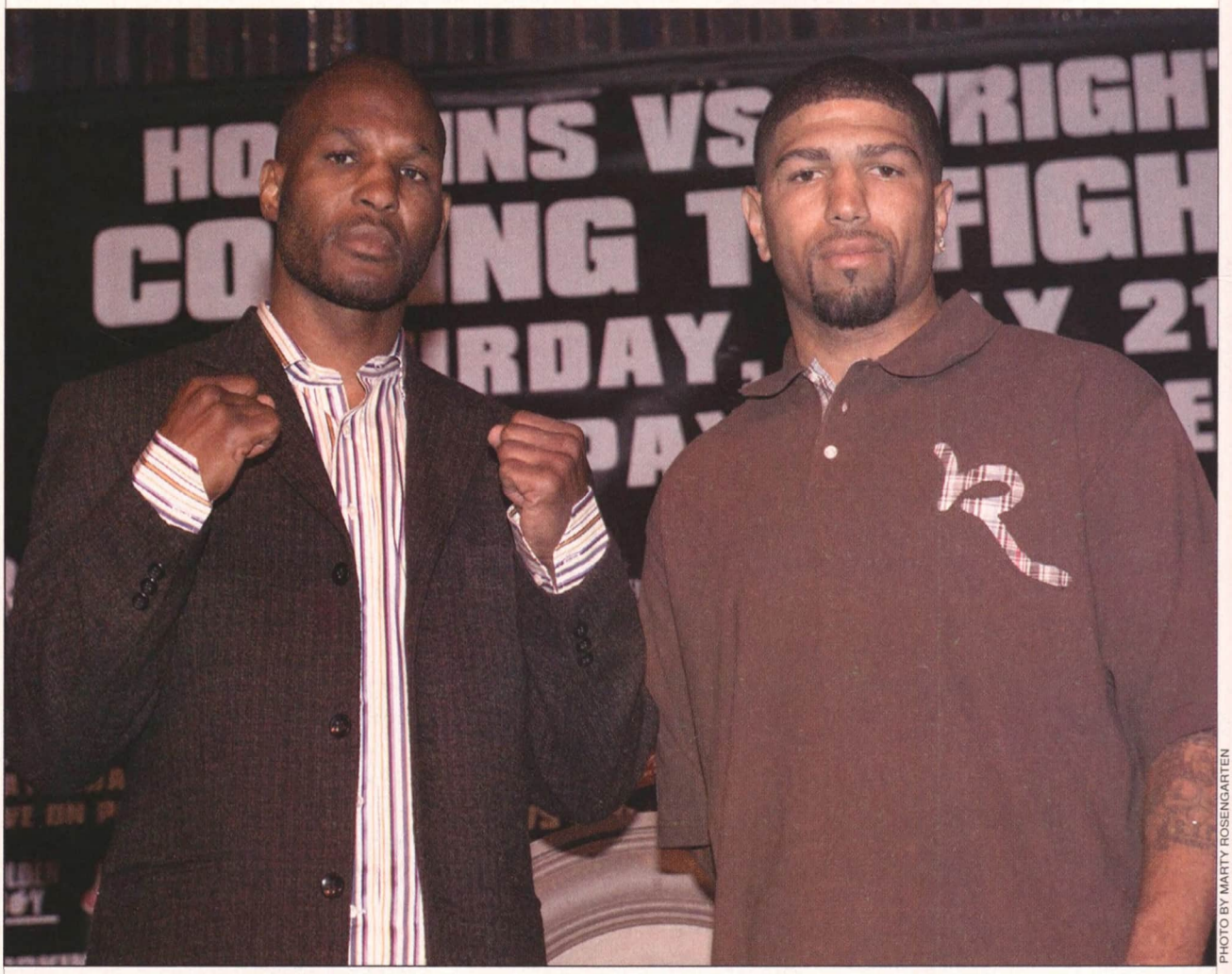


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Why are East Coast fighters Hopkins and Wright fighting in Vegas?

ROACH CAN TAKE IT: It wasn't terribly big news when Roger Mayweather leveled personal insults I won't repeat against the very decent and knowledgeable Freddie Roach before their respective fighters, Mayweather Jr. and De La Hoya, tangled in Vegas.

But when's the last time you heard an NFL or NBA coach dismiss his counterpart on another team as some kind of no-talent imbecile? The answer to that is never. Pro football, basketball, baseball, and hockey have their share of oafs and psychos. But their sports keep them on a leash. If a player or manager were to use the kind of language "Pretty Boy Floyd" used to describe Oscar on that series of prefight shows on HBO, for example, he'd be fined and/or suspended by his team (meaning, of course, the team owner).

Their strict policies governing what employees can and cannot say can make team sports appear more civilized then they really are. But no one sits atop the fight pyramid the way owners' associations rule big-time team sports. In fact, boxing doesn't form any kind of pyramid. It's more like one of those tangled blotches of paint Jackson Pollack used to pour on a canvas so he could pay his towering bar bills.

As long as it doesn't lead to people getting cheated, I personally enjoy the anarchy of boxing. I'm confident that Roach has what it takes to laugh off the rude taunts of the trainer across the ring and get on with his business. In fact, except for a few litigious warthogs who like to wave legal papers in your face, you won't find many people in the boxing world who are thin-skinned. It ain't ballet, after all. In a world that makes us remove our shoes before getting on a plane, it can be downright refreshing to have at least one institution in our rules-encrusted civilization that's governed by no one.

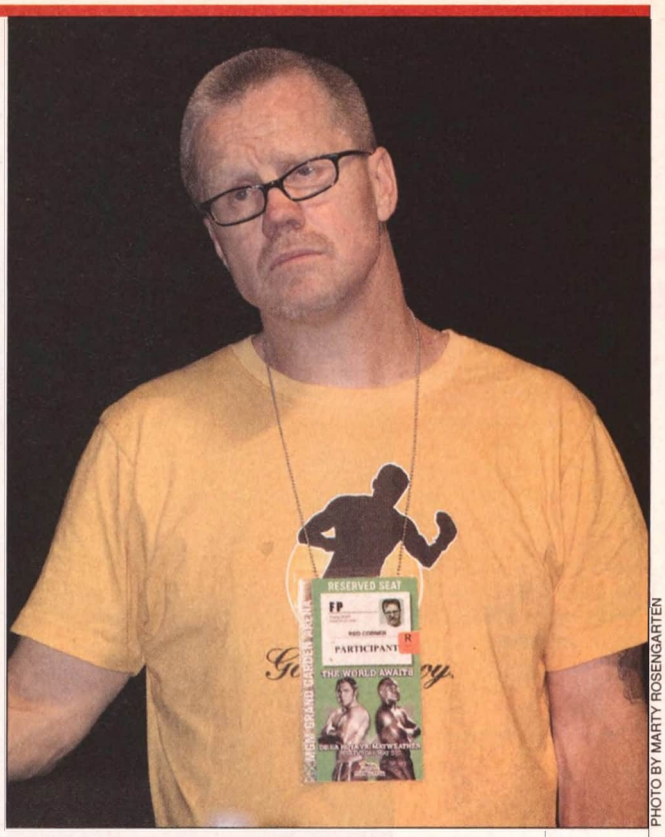


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Did Mayweather's comments prompt Roach's sad expression?

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Corrales following his amazing kayo of Castillo

R.I.P.: Diego "Chico" Corrales was a pleasure to talk to, an upbeat, intelligent young man. And when he got off the canvas twice in the 10th round to stop Jose Luis Castillo, he personified everything brave and fine in the sport. Those perfect moments endure as his legacy. Chico was one of those Roman candles Jack Kerouac wrote about. They don't burn long, but they burn bright. ■

Camera Clicks

This isn't pro wrestling, and we don't have six-man tag-team matches, but if we did, these guys would make a pretty formidable trio. Gathered together at the Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya weigh-in, Shane Mosley, Bernard Hopkins, and Roberto Duran are just one legend shy of striking a Mount Rushmore pose. (And please, no jokes about how the fourth legend is hiding under Duran's shirt.)

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

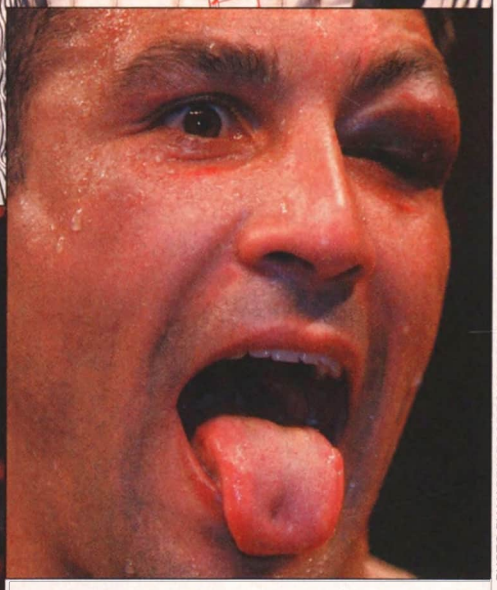


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

"This year for Halloween, I want to be Carmen Basilio!" Unfortunately for Argentine super middleweight Hector Javier Velazco, he doesn't fight quite as well as Basilio, so he came out on the wrong end of a decision against Juergen Braehmer. You have to say this for Velazco, though: He's in pretty good spirits for a guy who's half-blind and just suffered a defeat.

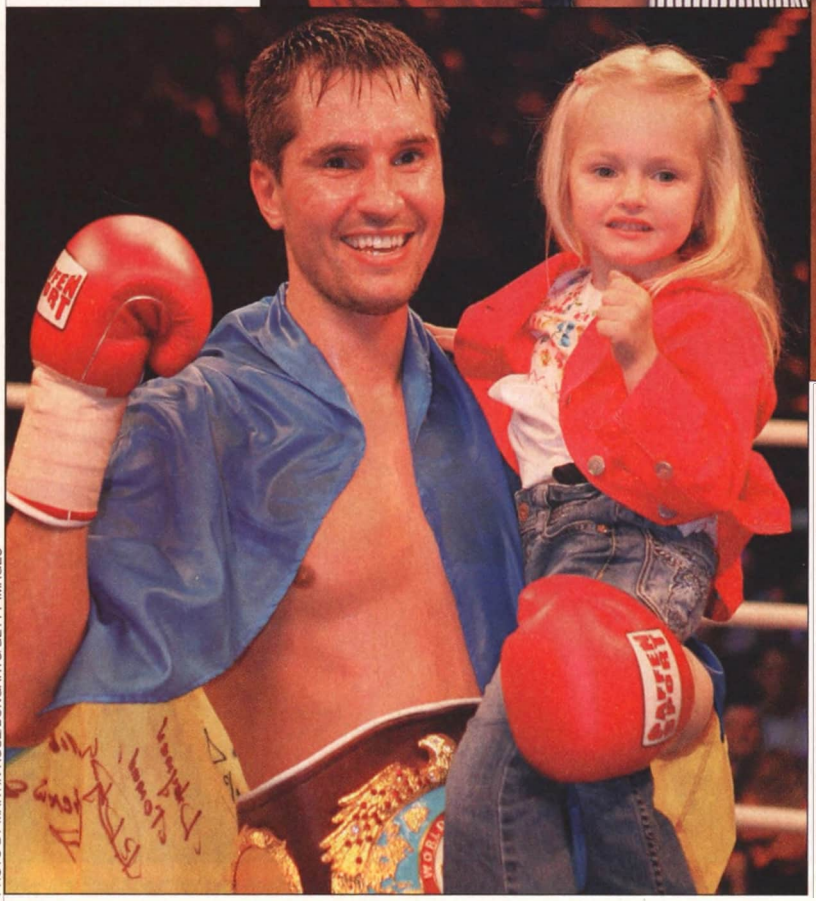


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Apparently it was "Take Your Daughter To Work Day" in Germany on May 19, so Sergei Dzindziruk brought little Nadja along to watch him defeat Carlos Nascimento. You know how inquisitive kids are, though, so things got ugly when the youngster started asking her dad to explain why the organization whose belt he's wearing once ranked a dead man, why three other men also claim to be junior middleweight champion, and, most troublingly for the father, to explain "stripping" to her.

Some people just aren't satisfied with pulling in $150-million in a single night. Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer also wanted to double check the scorecards and see if his fighter perhaps should have been declared the winner. Don't waste your time worrying about those silly little numbers, Richard. Just worry about the ones with six zeros after them, and you'll be just fine.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

And you wonder why Floyd Mayweather has such a big ego. Wouldn't you be pretty impressed with yourself if you had the power to turn one of the world's richest, most famous rappers into a belt-toting lackey? That's 50 Cent playing the role of Mayweather's belt rack. Meanwhile, just off camera, Eminem is shining Mayweather's shoes and Snoop Dogg is pressing his pants.

PHOTO BY WILL HART

The junior flyweight class may not be boxing's most glamorous division, but it has one thing many of the others don't: a legitimate world champion. Hugo Cazares receives his RING belt from Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins (behind Cazares) the day of his first title defense, against Wilfrido Perez, while Bob Halloran, director of sports for MGM/Mirage, interviews Cazares. Anyone know how you say "one world, one champion" in Spanish?

By Evan Korn

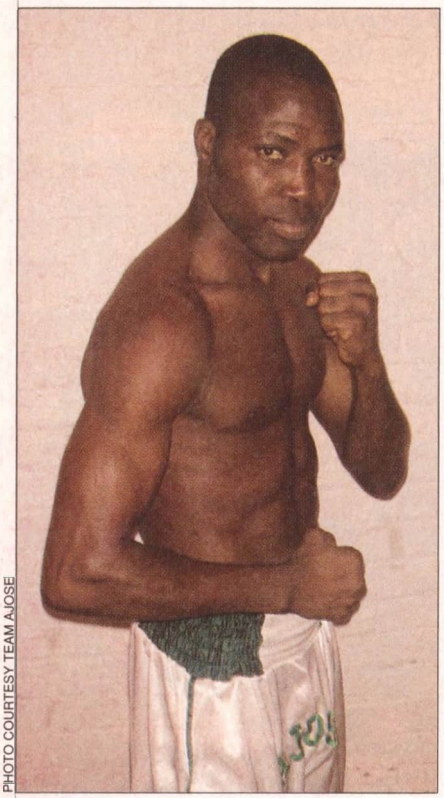
Ajose Olusegun Welterweight

Undefeated junior welterweight prospect Ajose Olusegun is swatting around the heavybag in a North London gym. The gym, a sprawling warehouse-like space, is nearly empty as one of boxing's best-kept secrets pops a hook that causes the bag to rattle back and forth like a bobble-head doll. The smooth beats of Bob Marley blare in the background, as Olusegun's punches form a perfect union with the music.

Marley is singing: "Don't worry about a thing. Every little thing is gonna be all right." But it is difficult for Olusegun to see the truth in those words. He fights and keeps on winning, but that big payday is as elusive as Reggie Bush in the open field. He can taste the big time, sense the day when the bright lights are shining on him. For now, however, there are no bright lights, only dreams of future prosperity. But here he is, on an unseasonably warm London day, grinding it out just like always.

As a child in gritty Lagos, Nigeria, the East London-based pugilist fought because that's what the culture demanded.

"It's a tough neighborhood," Olusegun said. "Whatever you want to earn, you have to fight for. It's not the way it is here in the West, where if you fight, you are a bad person. In fact, in Nigeria, nobody is going to say, 'Don't fight.' You fight to get respect. That's it. No hard feelings."



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Just because he fought battles in the streets didn't mean Olusegun longed to make a career between the ropes. He preferred kicking a ball around the soccer field instead of being kicked around inside the gym, but as the son of a local boxing coach, any other dreams of athletic glory were forbidden.

"My dad came to the football pitch one day and grabbed me by my ear and dragged me back to the gym," he said. "I never left boxing again."

With 1972 Nigerian Olympian Joe Mensah (a friend of his father) in his corner, Olusegun had a pair of gloves on his tiny hands by the time he was five years old. His first day in the gym, however, did not augur well for a fruitful future in the sport. The youngster was sent up against a local kid and took a beating. First round, Olusegun knocked down. Second round, Olusegun knocked down. Third round, well, you get the picture. From that point forward, the kid vowed not to let that happen again.

Despite his novice protégé being battered around like a rag doll, Mensah saw something he liked. He saw a kid with a future, with a toughness that would not be broken by a couple of beatdowns. And under Mensah's tutelage, Olusegun began an illustrious amateur career that would see him travel to exotic locales as a member of the Nigerian national team. By the time the 2000 Olympics rolled around, he had established himself as one of Africa's shining pugilistic stars.

"Before the Olympics, I beat many top amateur prospects around the world," Olusegun said. "If anybody was going to win a gold medal from Africa, it was going to be me."

The dream of Olympic glory consumed Olusegun. He expected gold. His family expected gold. His friends expected gold. His country expected him to be the first Nigerian gold medalist in Olympic history. A gold would have all but guaranteed Olusegun immortality. When Peter Konyegwachie won a featherweight silver medal for Nigeria in 1984, he was named the country's sportsman of the year. Like Konyegwachie, Olusegun had visions of returning to his home country with a smile plastered on his face and a medal wrapped around his neck.

But when the medal ceremony for junior welterweight division began, the Nigerian flag was not among those raised to the rafters. Instead of the fairytale Olympic ending, Olusegun lost in the tournament's second bout to eventual silver medalist

(Continued on Page 122)

Pro Record

2001		
May 24	Tony Montana, London, England	KO 1
June 21	Woody Greenway, London	KO 1
Sept. 9	Sunday Ajayi, Lagos, Nigeria	W 6
Oct. 4	Stuart Rimmer, London	KO 2
2002		
March 3	Gary Flear, London	W 4
June 13	Keith Jones, London	W 6
Oct. 30	Martin Holgate, London	KO 7
Nov. 27	Vladimir Kortovski, Tel-Avi, Isreal	KO 1
Dec. 15	Adewale Adegbusi, Lagos	KO 6
2003		
March 20	Cristian Hodorogea, London	W 4
April 26	Keith Jones, London	W 6
Oct. 29	Karl Taylor, London	W 6
2004		
April 10	Victor Kpadenue, Cross River, Nigeria	W 12
Sept. 3	Bradley Pryce, Monmouthshire, Wales	KO 4
2005		
March 26	Vasile Dragomir, London	W 8
2006		
May 26	Alexander Abramenko, London	KO 2
June 29	Ali Nuumbembe, London	KO 6
Nov. 17	Franck Aieloo, London	KO 2
2007		
March 9	Vladimir Khodovoski, Dagenham, Eng	W 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
19	19	0	0	10

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July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

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March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

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Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

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WHAT'S LEFT OF ROY JONES?

Maybe Not Enough To Compensate For What He's Lost

PHOTO BY MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

By David Mayo

Roy Jones slipping and snapping, with a style uniquely ingrained in his multi-tiered athleticism, outslicking Bernard Hopkins, befuddling James Toney, no longer is the only lasting image we have of one of the era's most unusual boxing talents. The images of Jones beaten, and beaten down, are more recent, more vivid. What Jones decides to do about that—or if he should do anything at all—gives us what would appear a final look into the fishbowl of a once-great champion who has stayed too long, and might have only one

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

That Jones was no longer a great fighter became clear in 2004, when he was twice knocked out, first by Antonio Tarver in May (above) and then by Glen Johnson in September (below).

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

answer to rectify that mistake: stay longer.

The people closest to him, and even some not so close, wish the 38-year-old Jones had drifted back to a life of breeding fighting roosters and living on his ring riches a few years back. But rampant rumors of low-eight-figure losses in the hip-hop industry might explain Jones' iffy inclination to stay active in boxing.

The dueling problems are that Jones doesn't seem equally inclined to take the kind of fights that could keep him active and moving toward a possible title shot, and keep the public interested. He hasn't fought since July 29, 2006, when he beat Prince Badi Ajamu in Boise, Idaho, none of which sounds particularly Jones-esque. Yet the alphabet bodies, as if to illustrate their minimal burden of proof, all have retained Jones as a top-10 light heavyweight, even though the 12-round decision over Ajamu

was Jones' only victory since winning the first of three fights with Antonio Tarver in 2003.

The signs were clear during that first Tarver fight that the Jones mystique was fading to black. Tarver figured it out as the fight went along, but got too far behind on points to compensate, before he knocked out and decisioned Jones in two subsequent fights, sandwiched around another Jones knockout loss, to Glen Johnson.

Jones once wore the pound-for-pound mantle proudly. But some of his successors now say that when his unique athleticism began to fade, the lack of a pure boxing foundation was exposed.

"When Roy's reflexes, when Roy's unorthodox style, when that style that entertained us, that had us going, 'Oh, wow," when that left him, he was a dead man walking," Hopkins said. "I always said this before: Roy Jones is a great Hall of Famer, had his run, did a great job. I'm not going to kick the man while he's down. But I compare Roy Jones to a basketball player friend of mine, Allen Iverson. When Allen Iverson loses his speed—because he's only 6', about my height, he's not a big guy—when he loses his speed and his reflexes and his quickness, he will be a basic player. When Roy Jones lost his speed and his quickness and his athleticism, he became average.

"Roy used to be able to jump in and land shots. He was even able to jump in and land a left hook on me. But Roy never had the basics."

Floyd Mayweather wears the pound-for-pound mantle today, which he successfully defended against Oscar De La Hoya in May, but during his many years of clamoring prematurely for that position, Mayweather took jabs at the various men wearing the crown—De La Hoya, Jones, Hopkins, etc.

Mayweather commonly would say he admired Jones' unusual skill set, but said they really weren't boxing skills. Mayweather, like Hopkins, drew a basketball analogy, and said Jones could have been successful at his second athletic love if he had stuck with the sport, because his talents would have translated well from the ring to the hardwood.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

A bemused-looking Jones is led from the ring following his scary kayo loss to Johnson, after which he had to stay in the ring almost half an hour before being able to leave under his own power. Some people are genuinely worried about his safety should Jones decide to keep fighting.

Today, Mayweather, who is also threatening to retire soon, while Jones seemingly will continue to fight too late, says when age eroded that unusual athleticism, Jones' was exposed.

"You can go back to what I said years ago," Mayweather said. "I always said that Roy Jones is a hell of a fighter, but how will it play out if he ever has to sit down, toe-to-toe, with a guy? Now, we're seeing it. I don't know how a guy doesn't miss the sport, so I can understand how a guy might find it hard to walk away. But with Roy, it shows what can happen if you hang on too long."

Mayweather said if Jones had retired after beating John Ruiz for an alphabet heavyweight belt in March 2003, "man, he would have gone down as huge."

Now, while Jones still has strong Hall of Fame credentials, there is substantial question about how much damage he has done to his legacy the last four years, and how much he could continue to tarnish it by fighting.

Problem is, no one seems to know whether Jones really is fighting. Promoter Lou DiBella said he doesn't know what Jones' plans are, and has heard the fighter might be plotting a return under promoter Murad Mu-hammad. Regardless, DiBella said Jones isn't helping himself by waffling on his

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

In his most recent start, Jones hammered out a comprehensive decision victory over Prince Badi Ajamu in July 2006. There was a time, not too long ago, that Jones would have stopped a fighter of Ajamu's quality in short order.

future boxing path.

"If he's going to fight, he needs to get back in the ring once or twice and show people he's still fighting," DiBella said. "There are a number of world-class fighters he can beat. Obviously, he's a shadow of what he was, but sure, there are world-class fighters he can beat right now. But does it matter? Does he beat a good, young guy? Probably not."

DiBella thought he had Jones locked into a June fight against Tony Hanshaw, which would have been televised by Showtime. It would have been Jones' debut on the network. DiBella reached a tentative agreement with Hanshaw's promoter, Gary Shaw, and the television network, but Jones backed out, and the fight didn't happen.

"That's why I was disappointed that Roy didn't take the Showtime fight, because it would have been the older veteran against a good, younger fighter," DiBella said. "If this is what he's going to do, he needs to get back in the ring. But if you were to ask me if he should still be fighting, I would say it sort of surprises me that he is, because he always said he wouldn't hang around too long in the game."

John Hornewer, a Chicago-based attorney, has represented several top fighters, including Jones and Mayweather. He acknowledges he is "concerned" for Jones, whom he always has liked personally.

"Roy just can't seem to find a dignified way out of the sport," Hornewer said.

Hornewer became concerned for Jones after the first Tarver fight, when it became apparent Jones still had the elusiveness and athleticism to outpunch Ruiz at heavyweight, but could not do the same eight months later when he fought the best available light heavyweight.

Jones had become a man with a unique style that might work against lower-top-10 heavyweights, or lower-top-10 light heavyweights, but not the elite of either. He quickly became a man with a legacy to prop up, but without a division in which to do it.

"Seeing him on the floor, getting knocked out by Glen Johnson, that was hard," Hornewer said. "Of the fighters I've seen, Floyd Mayweather is the most fundamentally sound, and Roy Jones is the most talented. But Roy's talents were based in speed and athleticism, and when those started to fade, he didn't have anything to fall back on, because he was never really taught how to fight."

That might have changed years ago, but when Jones and his father severed their boxer-trainer relationship in the early-1990s, Jones decided not to go with an established trainer.

Hornewer recalls sitting in a 1992 meeting at a gym in Pensacola, Florida, where Jones had to decide whom to hire to train him. He opted to go with little-known camp insider Alton Merkerson, and Hornewer said Jones expressed concern during that meeting that "everybody else will want to

change me."

Whether that was good for Jones during his pound-for-pound reign, or worked to his detriment the last four years by inhibiting his improvement as a fighter—or both—the tales of how Jones was nurtured over the years are only now beginning to escape. Sparring partners who weren't quite top-flight often were hired to work with Jones so as not to pick away at his flaws and diminish his ample confidence.

Jones often was criticized, particularly throughout the late-1990s and early this decade, for handpicking opponents and satisfying alphabet mandatories without justification. The public clamored for a fight with Darius Michalczewski for years, but Jones avoided it until the German finally lost a couple of fights.

Now, many of Jones' contemporaries say, the basis for those years of reluctance is coming to light.

Jones is going to the Hall of Fame. Glittering as his 50-4 (38) record is, it still represents a fairly precipitous drop from the 49-1 mark—with the loss a disqualification—which he sported after winning the first fight with Tarver.

He could stop right now and call it a career, but there could be the issue of the rumored heavy losses in the music industry (Jones has been affiliated for several years with hip-hop mogul and boxing manager James Prince), which might force him to fight again.

But if he does, whom does he fight, what greater purpose will it serve, does it only tarnish his legacy further, and can he actually beat a top super middleweight or light heavyweight? Jones is 38, and seems the oldest man in his division, even though he actually is younger than three chief arch-rivals at light heavyweight, Hopkins, Tarver, and Johnson.

If he were to beat a Chad Dawson, a Clinton Woods, or a Julio Gonzalez, would the potential value of the victory justify the risk of the fights?

Hopkins, who spent much of the 14 years since his 1993 loss to Jones asking for a rematch, finally has let that request go by the wayside. He was Jones' chief antagonist for many of those years, but as time passed, Hopkins' method bore more fruit. Jones had all the athleticism, while Hopkins had all the foundation. Jones was, for a time, a fighter for the ages. But Hopkins is an ageless fighter, and now looks at Jones' career, wondering whether anyone can help save it.

"If Roy goes to fight Calzaghe, and he goes across the water and knocks Joe Calzaghe out, he's the man again," Hopkins said. "But really, what else is there? That would be a significant win. That would at least buy him two fights. That would let people say Roy deserves a second coming. But you know that's not going to happen. Roy said he'll go over there, but we know that's not going to happen. Besides, we all know Joe Calzaghe doesn't need Roy Jones. That's just the truth about where it's at for Roy right now." ■

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Longtime nemesis Bernard Hopkins sought a rematch with Jones for years, but has abandoned the idea. Hopkins said that neither he nor other top fighters really need Jones anymore.

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

By Gavin Evans

The RING Grades Boxing's Elite

Every few months, some boxing pundit announces that things aren't what they used to be. Ignoring huge crowds in Germany, Denmark, Britain, the Philippines, and Mexico (to mention a few), the story will be about terminal decline, lamenting the dearth of real stars and serious talent: not like back in the good, old days when men were men and they could really fight.

Well, every two years we assess the talent at the top by giving the big names the top-to-toe treatment—our way of redressing the balance. It has to be conceded that in the United States the number of names with A-list pulling power is on the slide—reflecting the decline of free TV television and newspaper interest. But then again, for every missing Sugar Ray there's a Pacquiao, Hatton, Chagaev, or Kessler mobbed by the masses back in the old country. We started this report card in 2003 and did it again in 2005, so before moving on, a glance at those who have fallen off our last list and what we wrote about them in '05:

• Vitali Klitschko: If he got past Hasim Rahman he'd "likely reign for several more years." A series of injuries scuppered the Rahman fight, prompting Klitschko's retirement. Now he's back—to fight the Sam Peter-Oleg Maskaev winner.

• Chris Byrd: We warned he was no longer the defensive genius of old "meaning he's likely to suffer his third official defeat soon." He was bludgeoned to defeat by Wladimir Klitschko.

• Mike Tyson: "A few wins over journeymen and retreads, and he can climb in with Klitschko ... and take another beating," we said. He climbed in with Kevin McBride and gave up.

• James Toney: We warned of "inevitable defeat as age creeps ever forward" and that's exactly what happened against Sam Peter.

• Glen Johnson: "If he loses to Tarver ... he'll return to the ranks of the contenders, and by then will probably be too old to get back to the top again," we said. He lost to Tarver, then to Clinton Woods, and is back to the ranks.

• Antonio Tarver: We predicted if he beat Johnson "he could set himself up for some superfights, perhaps with Hopkins." He beat Johnson, and then had a superfight with Hopkins, who beat him out of sight.

• Felix Trinidad: "If Wright outboxes him ... it's hard to see where he can move other than a return to the pasture," we warned. Wright spanked him and "Tito" is back to that pasture.

• Fernando Vargas: It was "difficult to imagine him beating Hopkins, Wright, or even Jermain Taylor," we said. He was stopped twice by Shane Mosley.

• Zab Judah: He had major star potential despite his iffy chin, we said, "providing, of course, he keeps winning." Instead, he lost to Carlos Baldomir and Floyd Mayweather.

• Kostya Tszyu: "Time is running out," we noted, "as he'll be 36 this year"—quicker than expected, after 11 rounds with Ricky Hatton.

• Arturo Gatti: He was "not the most gifted fighter in the talent-rich junior welter division." He lost to Mayweather, then to Baldomir.

• Marco Antonio Barrera: He could "still be competitive at the very top for a couple more years." Those years are up and he lost to Juan Manuel Marquez.

• Erik Morales: It all depended on what happened against the "far quicker and lighter Pacquiao." Pac-Man twice demolished him.

Now, on to the present. Our list is compiled according to talent, achievement, marketability, support systems, and growth potential. They are listed in order of weight, starting with the heavyweights.

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Wladimir Klitschko

48-3 (43)

TALENT: The world's number-one heavyweight is an extremely large, athletic man (a lean, broad-shouldered, well-honed 6'6", 245 pounds). His long amateur career (he claims 134 wins in 140 unpaid bouts, ending in Olympic super heavyweight gold in Barcelona in 1996) helped to make him into an extremely well-schooled defensive boxer, and over the past couple of years Emanuel Steward has been honing those skills and improving his offensive arsenal. "Dr Steelhammer" prefers to box at long range, employing his 81-inch reach to pump out a jolting left jab, and his right cross and left hook are also out of the top drawer. He is heavy-handed, but also has surprising handspeed for a man of his size and throws some mean combinations. His drawbacks are his chin (dropped 11 times, stopped three times) and his stamina (which has been behind two of those three losses). ***Grade: B+***

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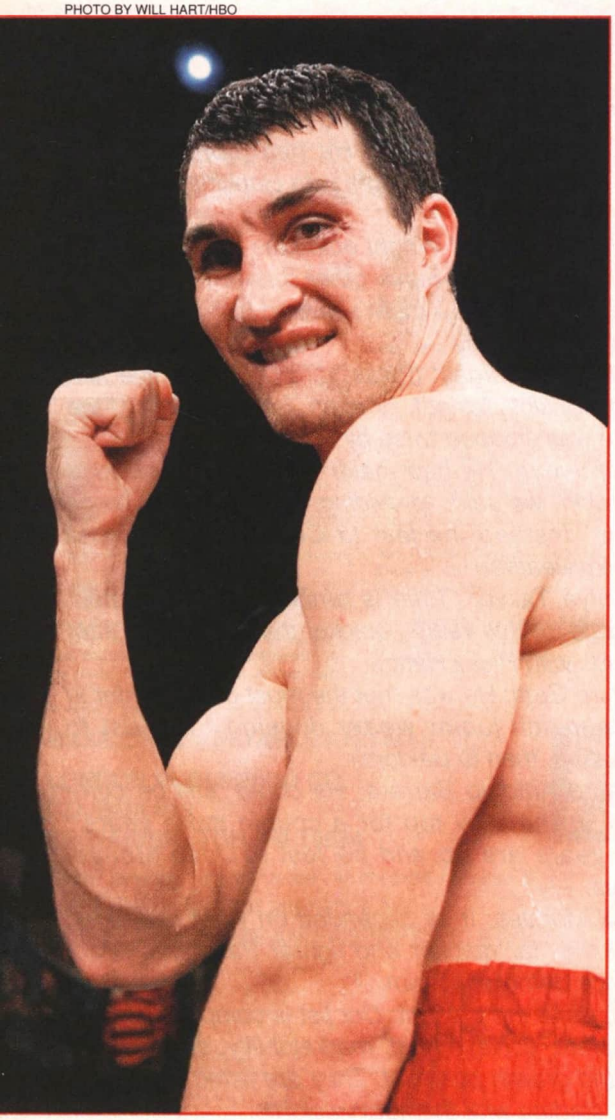


ACHIEVEMENT: Here he rates several levels above his rival titleholders, but the competition is hardly intense. His Olympic gold medal success combined with professional victories over Chris Byrd (twice), Samuel Peter, Jameel McCline, Ray Mercer, Frans Botha, Calvin Brock, and Monte Barrett sound respectable enough. But they need to be balanced against those shock stoppage losses to Ross Puritty, Corrie Sanders, and Lamon Brewster. Dr Steelhammer still has a lot to prove. ***Grade: B***

MARKETABILITY: Better than the other leading heavies, but again, the competition is hardly intense. He's reasonably good-looking, smart (a chess-playing Ukrainian Ph.D.), speaks better English than his big brother, Vitali, currently lives in California, and is loved by HBO, so the growth potential in America is considerable (he's already huge in the Ukraine and Germany), as long as he keeps on winning. A rematch victory over Brewster followed by a title unification bout will make a good deal of difference. ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Wladimir is a clean liver who stays in shape all year round and does not require an extensive nanny system to keep him honest. He's officially self-managed, but takes advice from Berndt Boente, Manny Steward, and his brother. He's also been self-promoted (under the K2 banner) ever since his costly split-up with the German promoters Universum three years ago. Completing the picture is Steward's role as head trainer, which has taken Klitschko to a higher level in recent years. It all seems to work pretty effectively. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: If he gets past his rematch with Lamon Brewster in Germany in July, he should press hard for a unification bout, which will go a long way to consolidating his status as the world's number-one big man (although his brother's comeback may put that one in doubt). He's only 31 (fairly young by contemporary standards) and is still improving, so he could still go a very long way. There is no heavyweight out there that Wladimir Klitschko can't beat, but his chin and stamina could, at any stage, set him back once more. ***Grade: A-***

Sam Peter

28-1 (22)

TALENT: Until recently, it looked like the thickly built Nigerian was just a tough, strong, heavy-handed plodder—extremely powerful but limited. He seemed to have no idea how to cut off the ring, his punches were wild, inaccurate swings, and he seldom remembered to move his head. But in his second fight with James Toney, in January 2007, he was a revelation—fitter and faster, certainly, but also a far more rounded boxer, showing a thumping left jab (he actually used it to drop Toney), sound defense, and a high workrate. It is still too early to say which version will settle (he clearly has the potential for bigger things, but he hasn't always trained diligently). Even at his worst, the 6', 250-pound Peter punches extremely hard and takes a great shot, which may be enough with current state of boxing's premier division. ***Grade: B***

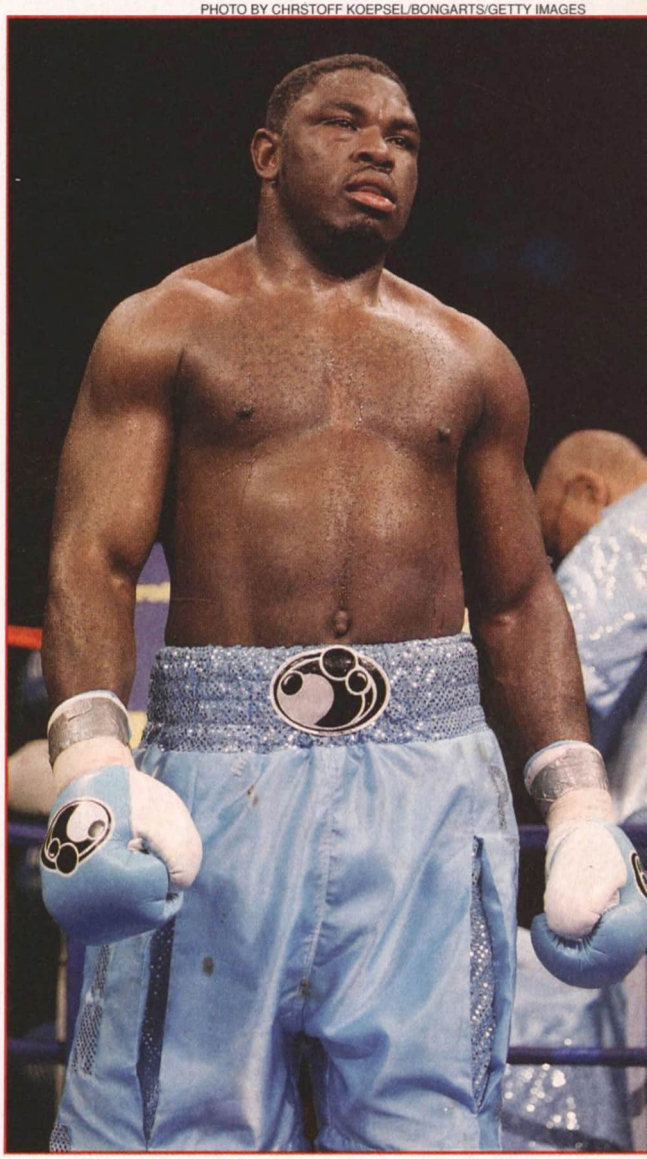
ACHIEVEMENT: After a brief, sparse amateur career (22 fights and an Olympic quarter final exit), he turned professional and raked up 24 straight wins, the best of them a chilling second-round knockout of Jeremy Williams. Then he tangled with Wladimir Klitschko, and despite scoring three knockdowns, he seemed bereft of ideas. He was reluctant to press his advantage and was soundly outboxed for long spells, and badly wobbled in the final round, deservedly losing the decision. He regrouped, won a controversial nod against Toney and then, to the surprise of most viewers, won virtually every round in the return, turning "Lights Out" into a very old man overnight. ***Grade: B-***

MARKETABILITY: That last win over Toney boosted his credentials and made up for his lethargic display in their first fight and the memory of his rather limited display against Klitschko in '05. The big Nigerian, who currently lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, is still a long way from being a major league, A-grade drawing card. But if he gets past Oleg Maskaev for the WBC belt later this year, he will certainly be considered the big beast of the division. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: The effectiveness of this system was demonstrated by the fact that, after a long promotional tussle, it was Peter, rather than Vitali Klitschko, who secured the next shot at Maskaev. He's managed by Ivailo Gotzev, trained by Pops Anderson and Jesse Reid, and promoted in the U.S. by Dino Duva, who won the rights to promote the Maskaev fight. So far, the combination has been effective. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At a mere 26 years old, Peter is the youngest of the current crop and he has clearly improved over the past nine months, suggesting that there could be a good deal more to come, provided he doesn't revert to the lackadaisical training approach of his past. A win over Maskaev will set him up for a showdown against Vitali Klitschko, and if he gets past that one, a return with Wladimir. They are all big hurdles, particularly the last two, when he will be the underdog, but far from insurmountable. ***Grade: A-***

PHOTO BY CHRSTOFF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES



Wladimir Klitschko (right) came off the floor to decision Samuel Peter in September 2005, and a rematch between the two could possibly decide a new, universally accepted heavyweight champion.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Ruslan Chagaev

23-0-1 (17)

TALENT: The Germany-based Uzbekistan southpaw has been the sleeper in the division since turning professional (for the second time) in '02. Chagaev is a hard-hitting, well-schooled box-fighter of considerable potential, who slipped under the U.S. radar because of a lack of exposure. Therefore, some were surprised with the ease of his victory over the giant Nicolay Valuev for the WBA belt. Chagaev is not particularly big for a modern heavyweight (just under 6'1", 228 pounds), but he's reasonably quick, heavy-handed, and versatile, possesses a sound range of defensive and offensive boxing skills, and has the self-discipline to succeed at an elite level. He proved that decisively in outboxing Valuev (who had an 11-inch height advantage) from long range, with his jab and left cross making the difference. ***Grade: B+***

ACHIEVEMENT: Like most leading Eastern European heavyweights, Chagaev has the advantage of a long amateur schooling—his unpaid record was 82-3 and he beat Felix Savon for the 1997 World Amateur heavyweight gold medal (winning two out of four against the Cuban legend), but was stripped when it was discovered he'd had two professional fights (in Illinois in '97). He returned legitimately under current amateur rules to take super heavyweight gold at the '01 World Amateur Championships, before turning professional (again) in Germany. His only blemish is a technical draw (the result of a ridiculous refereeing decision) against Rob Calloway, whom he later flattened in two. Good wins over Britain's Michael Sprott and current European champion Vladimir Virchis set him up for an eliminator against John Ruiz, whom he clearly outpointed, followed by the Valuev victory. ***Grade: B***

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LATZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: Chagaev is a national hero back home in Uzbekistan and his popularity is growing in the Islamic world (he's a Muslim) and in Germany, but he is largely an unknown quantity in the United States, despite having had six American fights (early in his professional career) and calling himself "The White Tyson." He really needs to return to the United States, and tangle with one of the American names (like Shannon Briggs or James Toney) to rectify this problem. ***Grade: B-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: After that early wobble (those two fights then a return to the amateur ranks), he seems to have been in sound hands and has been guided well. Trained by Michael Timm, managed by Taymas Niazov and Klaus-Peter Kohl, and promoted by Kohl, he has made solid, steady, and consistent progress. Only problem is that Kohl is notoriously reluctant to send his boxers abroad, which might hold back Chagaev in the future. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Chagaev is still improving and at 28 has several years left at the top. It all depends, firstly, on whether he can secure a unification bout (for instance, against Peter if he beats Maskaev, or one of the Klitschkos) and if he can get past any of these big men. Our guess is that Kohl will set him a softer path, comprising respectable Germany-based defenses, for the next year or so. ***Grade: B+***

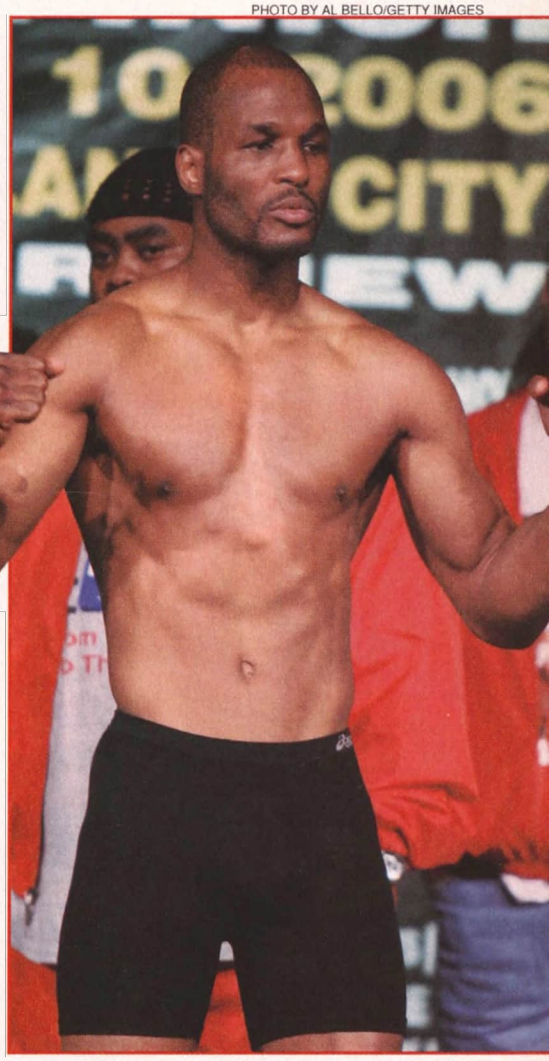
Bernard Hopkins

47-4-1 (32), with 1 no-contest

TALENT: Just when we thought the old man had run out of puff, he steamed back to outclass the younger, bigger Antonio Tarver for the world light heavyweight title—possibly the finest achievement of his 18-year career. "The Executioner" was once a rugged, dirty brawler, but gradually transformed himself into a safety-first, dirty, boxer who paces himself carefully and boxes defensively (with occasional reversions to the past, like when he brutally mauled William Joppy to defeat in '03). This and his phenomenal conditioning, combined with his exemplary lifestyle, has kept him at the top for 14 years. At 42, there has inevitably been some slippage, but he retains that magnificent boxing brain and that vast array of skills, to remain one of the best in the world. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: It took Hopkins 6½ years as IBF middleweight titleholder before he broke into the big league with his brilliant stoppage of Felix Trinidad to claim the world title. Then he did next to nothing for two years, waiting for the right deal, which eventually arrived in the form of an overly ambitious Oscar De La Hoya, who he knocked out in nine with a bodyblow. Hopkins eventually raked up 20 defenses, with his victims including Glen Johnson, John David Jackson, Keith Holmes, Antwun Echols, William Joppy, and Howard Eastman, along with Trinidad and De La Hoya. Two disputed losses to Jermain Taylor were followed by that emphatically one-sided victory over Tarver, punctuated by a fifth-round knockdown. The only point against him is that he has only fought once overseas (an IBF title bout in Ecuador—against Segundo Mercado—where he was dropped twice but salvaged a draw). ***Grade: A+***

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



MARKETABILITY: The blue-collar ex-con, who rose through the hard Philly school, gradually worked his way into the A-division, his wins over Trinidad, De La Hoya, and Tarver securing the deal. His central role in Golden Boy Promotions certainly makes a difference, but he'll never be a De La Hoya when it comes to pulling power. ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: This is a tough one because he's made some apparently crazy decisions along the way and has never been easy to deal with, but in the end, has always landed on his feet. His unreasonable demands meant he missed out on a $6-million return with Roy Jones and took on several forgettable, low-grade assignments, but then he earned even more against De La Hoya. He's had big time fallouts with Butch Lewis, America Presents, Don King, and Lou DiBella, and with long-time trainer Bouie Fisher. His current trainer, Nazim Richardson, recently suffered a minor stroke, and Freddie Roach is expected to fill in for the Wright fight. After a lot of turmoil, B-Hop now seems to have found a comfortable niche through his role in Golden Boy Promotions. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Most 42-year-old boxers do not grow, but then Hopkins may just be an exception. If he can beat Winky Wright on July 21, don't be surprised if he presses on, perhaps even keeping his word about bulking up to heavyweight. Sooner or later, however, it has to end. ***Grade: B-***

Joe Calzaghe took his career to a new level when he beat previously undefeated Jeff Lacy for the vacant super middleweight world title in March 2006.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Joe Calzaghe

43-0 (32)

TALENT: The Welsh southpaw has been an unknown quantity outside of his cozy home base for most of his career—unbeaten but untested at the truly elite level. Finally, in '06, he went through with a genuine even-money challenge against then-unbeaten IBF super middleweight titleholder Jeff Lacy, and excelled, showing blistering speed, dazzling combination punching, along with superior timing, defensive skill, and workrate to outclass the American. Since then, however, he's reverted to type—injury after injury, low-grade opposition, a reluctance to leave home, and, against Sakio Bika, another underwhelming performance. At his best, the 6' world champion certainly belongs among the pound-for-pound elite, but he shows an odd reluctance to prove it. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: Forget his claim about 20 world title defenses. That's based on holding the low-rent WBO belt interminably. In our book, he's made two world title defenses, those after claiming the vacant RING belt against Lacy. Still, that 43-0 record includes worthy names aside from Lacy: Chris Eubank, Robin Reid, Richie Woodhall, Byron Mitchell, and Charles Brewer. Counting against him is the fact that only once in his career has he ventured out of Britain and he's never fought in America. Part of the blame must go to his promoter, Frank Warren, but Calzaghe hasn't exactly pushed for it. Also, he never managed to secure a unification bout with Sven Ottke and has yet to secure a showdown with Mikkel Kessler. He's also pulled out of several big fights, twice against Glen Johnson because of broken hands, damaged elbows, and other ailments. **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: In his last fight, against no-hoper Peter Manfredo Jr., he attracted a crowd of 35,000 at his home in Cardiff. Warren knows how to build up his boys, and with Calzaghe he's certainly pulled it off. Calzaghe's profile has been raised through fighting on terrestrial television (ITV) in his last three fights, which, have also been shown on HOB, raising his profile in the United States. But to take it to the next level, he needs to settle scores with Kessler or venture across the Atlantic Ocean to tangle with another big-name American. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: His relationship with his father, Enzo, who's one of the most innovative trainers around, has certainly stood the test of time—helped by Joe's inclination to stay in shape. For most of his career, he has been promoted by Warren, who has built him up successfully at home but has not shown much interest in taking him abroad, and, aside from Lacy, has failed to secure the big name showdowns that would have taken him to the next level. **Grade: A**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: This depends on Warren securing him the big fight he needs. The formidable Kessler is the most interesting option, but for Calzaghe really to break into the premier league, he also needs to leave the comfort zone and take his chances in an American ring. **Grade: A-**

Mikkel Kessler

39-0 (29)

TALENT: The 6'1" Dane is, without doubt, the number-one boxer in continental Europe. HBO viewers would have noticed his class when he won every round in dishing out a bad beating to the previously unbeaten Mexican-American, Librado Andrade, in his last fight—one that most pundits expected to be close and competitive. He also drew rave reviews in flattening Markus Beyer to unify the WBA and WBC super middleweight belts, followed by former champion Eric Lucas, and in dominating the talented Anthony Mundine. Kessler is strong, hard-hitting with both hands, has an extremely solid jab, and is stylistically versatile. He also moves well, knows how to cut off the ring, possesses a refined range of skills, and is particularly impressive as a combination puncher. In addition, he appears to possess a firm chin (having never been down). Like Calzaghe, however, he's been plagued by hand and back injuries. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: Kessler deserves credit for his willingness to accept tough challenges and to travel to meet them (in fighting Mundine on the Australian's home patch, back in '05, and in publicizing his willingness to face Calzaghe in Wales). The Mundine win, along with his victories over Beyer, Andrade, Lucas, Manny Siaca, Dingaan Thobela, and Julio Cesar Green, make for a solidly impressive resume. He started out as a 19-year-old junior middleweight nine years ago, moved to middleweight in '99, filled out to super middle in '00, and finally lifted the WBA belt from Siaca in '04. Since then he's been consistently sound. ***Grade: A-***

MARKETABILITY: The "Viking Warrior" is a huge draw in Denmark and he's pretty big in Germany too, while his win over Andrade, shown on HBO, was intended to introduce him to American fight fans. He speaks English well and has an engaging personality, but to break through he needs more. Basically, he has to beat Calzaghe and travel again to the United States (he previously fought in Las Vegas, but that was back in '00). ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: The muscular, heavily tattooed Kessler always turns up in superb condition and appears to live the life outside the ring. His long amateur career gave him an excellent grounding, which his professional trainer, Ricard Olsen, has built on. He is promoted by Mogens Palle and managed by Mogens' daughter, Bettina Palle, who, together, have guided him along the right path—building his support base at home while preparing him to take occasional chances in traveling abroad when the right offer arises. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He's only 28, so it seems reasonable to expect that he will continue to improve. But it is no good getting better unless you have the opponent to show off the improvement. He needs to secure a fight with Calzaghe and then win it—both big ifs—after which someone of the order of Jermain Taylor, Winky Wright, or Kelly Pavlik will fit the bill. ***Grade: A***

PHOTO BY TORSTEN BLACKWOOD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Jermain Taylor

26-0-1 (17)

TALENT: The world middleweight champion is one of those rare fighters whose reputation (and, apparently, his fighting ability) actually seemed to diminish after winning the world title. He was once seen as the post-Bernard Hopkins future at 160, but despite lifting and retaining the title, this is certainly no longer the case. He was more than lucky to get the nod against the 40-year-old Hopkins in their first fight, barely did better in the return, got the worst of his draw with Winky Wright, and, most surprisingly, was given a rough argument by the tiny Kassim Ouma, followed by an even harder, split decision struggle against another little man, Cory Spinks. He's big for the division (6'1"), has a solid jab, a more than decent right, and is no slouch defensively. On the other hand, "Bad Intentions" has poor footwork, is reluctant to let his hands go, and appears to have no clue about what do on the ropes. **Grade: B**

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

ACHIEVEMENT: He's the *world* middleweight champion, has defended it four times, has an officially unbeaten record, and has the stellar names of Hopkins and Wright on his resume. It all sounds pretty impressive. But looked at him from a different angle and you'd have to say it is not clear he genuinely beat either of these old men, and prior to that the only other respectable names on his record belonged to past-their-peak William Joppy and Raul Marquez. Taylor has since downgraded to taking on blown-up welterweights. Once was acceptable; twice is curious. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: His engaging personality, Olympic pedigree (bronze medal in Sydney in '00), unbeaten record, undisputed world title, and nominal victories over Hopkins should have made him an A-list fighter, but that hasn't quite happened. Basically, his consistently disappointing performances and the sense of unfulfilled promise have prevented this. HBO has kept faith, but he really needs an exciting and decisive win over Kelly Pavlik to make the leap. **Grade: B-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: In Emanuel Steward, Taylor now has one of the best trainers in the game, one who does his best work with rangy boxers like the world middleweight champion. He's also been well served in the managerial and promotional departments by Ozell Nelson and Lou DiBella. And yet, despite all this, he hasn't quite gelled as a fighting machine. **Grade. A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He's certainly still young enough (at 28) to right the wrongs of his recent past and improve. If he can get back on track with an impressive win over the dangerous Pavlik (others like Wright [again] or Arthur Abraham might also fit the bill) and then move up to take on Mikkel Kessler or Joe Calzaghe, the boxing public will take notice again. But it has to be said that at the moment there is a strong chance the nice guy from Little Rock, Arkansas, would lose all of those fights. **Grade: B+**

Kelly Pavlik

31-0 (28)

TALENT: The 6'2", 25-year-old from Youngstown, Ohio, suddenly became one of the hottest young fighters in the world with his display of power and purpose in dispatching favored Edison Miranda in seven brutally thrilling rounds. What impressed most was the single-minded way Pavlik went about his task, putting the heavy-handed Colombian bully on the back foot as he bombed away with his big right. "The Ghost' can be reasonably elusive when he wants and has sound boxing skills, but is no Willy Pep. He had to absorb some huge shots from Miranda, but kept on pressing until he dropped the Colombian twice in the sixth before finishing him in the seventh. Pavlik is extremely well-conditioned, very busy, throws his punches in impressive combinations, and has a hard attitude as well as a beast of a right hand. He would benefit from a bit more movement of head and foot, but his jaw seems extremely sound (although he's been dropped twice). ***Grade: B+***

ACHIEVEMENT: Prior to the Miranda fight, Pavlik was essentially untested, and, partly because he was a white fighter from the Midwest, there was considerable skepticism about his ability, despite his unbeaten record. He had a promising 89-9 amateur career (national junior Golden Gloves champion and national under-19 champion at 147 pounds) before turning pro a few days after his 18th birthday. He was brought along slowly before breaking through in 2005 with stoppage wins over Colombia's Fulgencio Zuniga, America's Bronco McCart, and Mexico's Jose Luis Zertuche secured him a HBO spot against Miranda. The manner of his victory over the vicious Colombian, regarded by many as the uncrowned middleweight champion, changed perceptions and made Pavlik the man to beat in the 160-pound ranks. ***Grade: B***

MARKETABILITY: Pavlik's power and heart, if not his complexion, make him one of the most exciting young boxers in the world. His victory over Miranda completely eclipsed Jermain Taylor's boring split decision win over Cory Spinks, making The Ghost a highly marketable commodity. One big, bold kayo win is not enough to make him into a superstar, but if he can repeat the trick, he'll be very close. ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He's been brought along at just the right pace by trainer Jack Loewe (working in Youngstown's South Side Boxing Gym), co-managers Cameron Dunkin and his father, Michael Pavlik, and promoter Bob Arum—not rushed too early but ready to take a risky fight when the opportunity arose. Of course, it helps that he's a dedicated athlete who trains exceptionally hard. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: In the short term, this will depend on whether Taylor accepts his challenge instead of taking on Joe Calzaghe at super middleweight. If Pavlik can beat Taylor, and, based on their respective performances in Memphis on May 19, you'd have to give him a strong chance, he can set himself up for big paydays against Arthur Abraham, Joe Calzaghe, and Mikkel Kessler. At the age of 25 he has several years left on the clock, suggesting he'll be with us for some time to come. ***Grade: A***

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

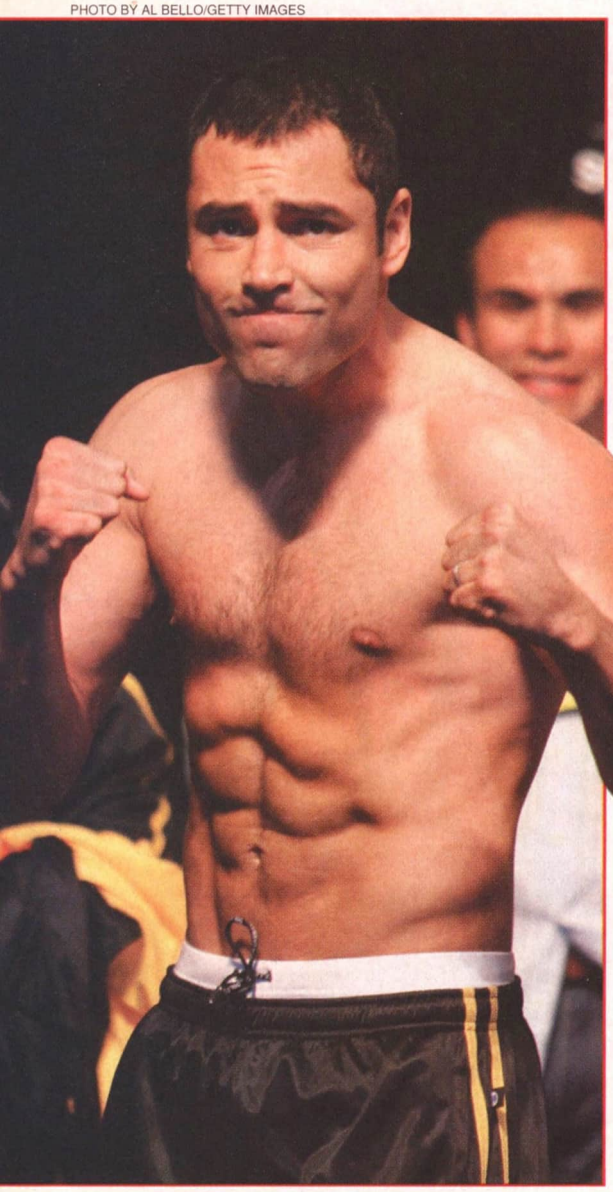
ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Oscar De La Hoya

38-5 (30)

TALENT: Now that the dust has settled on the Mayweather-De La Hoya megafight, it seems clear that even if "The Golden Boy" is not quite the force of old, he's still one of the best around. He fought the pound-for-pound supremo close enough for the live crowd and one of the judges to feel he deserved it, which suggests he still has a lot left to offer should he decide to press on. De La Hoya, a left-handed orthodox boxer, has one of the best jabs and left hooks in the business, he throws punches in spectacular bunches, owns a superb blocking and parrying defense, a sound chin, and has a fearsome killer instinct. But at 34, he's slowing down and tends to tire in the later rounds. **Grade: A**

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



ACHIEVEMENT: After winning Olympic gold, he picked up title belts in four divisions (forget those WBO baubles at super feather and middleweight—they're worth nothing). The names of his conquests make an impressive list: Ricardo Mayorga, Fernando Vargas, and Javier Castillejo at junior middle, Arturo Gatti, Ike Quartey, Hector Camacho, and Pernell Whitaker at welterweight, Julio Cesar Chavez and Miguel Angel Gonzalez at junior welter, and Jesse James Leija, Genaro Hernandez, Rafael Ruelas, John-John Molina, and Jorge Paez at lightweight. Sure, a few decisions in his favor have been debatable (Whitaker and Felix Sturm), but then again he got the raw end against Felix Trinidad. All in all, the 15-year career of the Golden Boy has been exemplary. **Grade: A+**

MARKETABILITY: Look at the way he promoted his showdown with Mayweather, building it up as a front-and-back-page event, and then look at that charming smile and those considered tones after the decision went against him, and you start to see why Oscar is the most marketable boxer, not just of his own generation, but since the retirement of Muhammad Ali. Quite simply, he transcends boxing. **Grade: A+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: The Golden Boy has moved from trainer to trainer, picking up bits and pieces before moving on, but it seems to have done him no harm. For Mayweather, he ditched Floyd's dad and picked up Freddie Roach, who did a fine job. He's famously self-promoted and has made several wise business decisions—first in picking the much-sought-after Swiss banker Richard Schaefer to run the business side of things and then recruiting former opponents Hopkins and Mosley, along with Marco Antonio Barrera, to boost the brand image of his group and to draw in new talent. **Grade: A+**

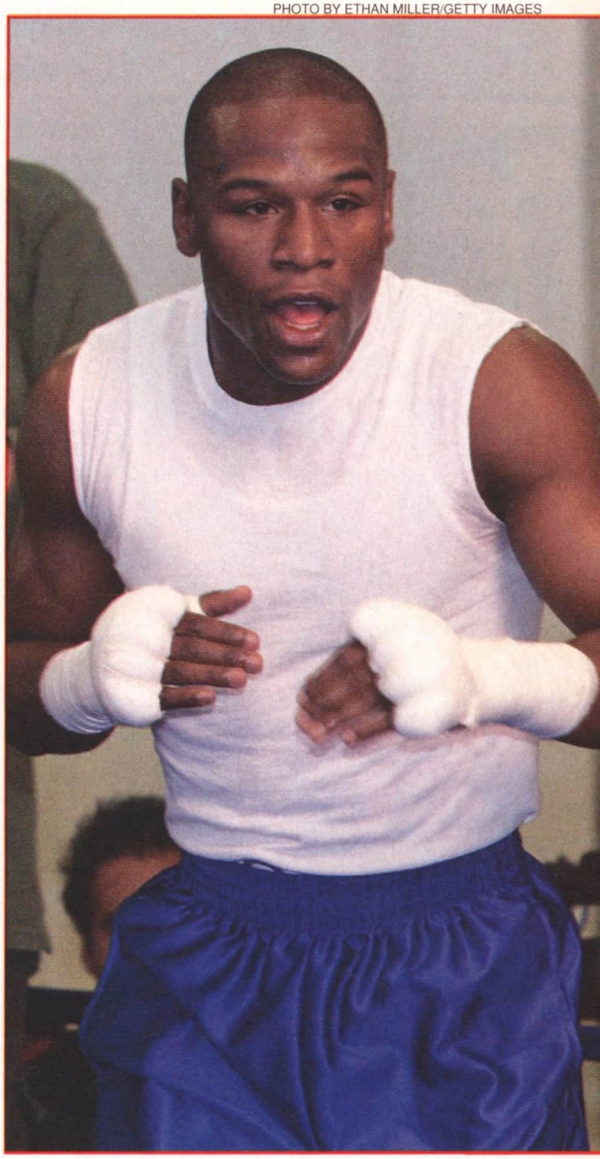
GROWTH POTENTIAL: It's highly unlikely that he will actually improve, but, if he decides to fight on, there may be a bit more left in the tank. A return with Mayweather might generate millions more, but if he couldn't beat Pretty Boy at 34, what chance will he have at 35? On the other hand, his promotional reach, which is already beginning to threaten that of Arum and King, will continue to grow. **Grade: B**

Floyd Mayweather

38-0 (24)

TALENT: There is very little serious dispute about Mayweather's status as the world's number-one boxer, pound-for-pound. He may have had more trouble than expected against Oscar De La Hoya, but, in the end, he solved the puzzle of the bigger man and deserved the split decision. "Pretty Boy Floyd" is the consummate boxer—extraordinarily quick with hands and feet, razor-sharp reflexes, multi-layered defensive skills, impeccable timing, the ability to fight as well on the inside, at middle range, and at long range, plus wonderfully accurate counterpunching skill. Little tricks like his shoulder-roll defense employing help to make him untouchable by all but the quickest fighters. Drawbacks include his fragile hands and the fact that he has not taken his punch with him as he's moved up in weight. ***Grade: A+***

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES



ACHIEVEMENT: After an 84-6 amateur career that ended with an Olympic bronze medal (he lost a dubious verdict in the semifinals), the reigning welterweight champion won title belts at five weights—from super feather to junior middle and remains undefeated. Only De La Hoya and Jose Luis Castillo (in their first fight) have stayed close. Other victims include Carlos Baldomir, Zab Judah, and Sharmba Mitchell at welterweight, Arturo Gatti and De Marcus Corley at junior welter, Philip Ndou at lightweight, and Jesus Chavez, Carlos Hernandez, Diego Corrales, Gregorio Vargas, Angel Manfredy, and Genaro Hernandez at junior light. In pure boxing terms, that's just about as perfect as a modern career could get. ***Grade: A+***

MARKETABILITY: Mayweather bemoans the fact that despite his superior ability, he has never come close to achieving the popular status of De La Hoya. The reason has everything to do with Pretty Boy Floyd's limitations as a human being—not just the obnoxious way he taunts opponents, but also the woman-beating and other scrapes outside the ring. Still, he's so good and has achieved so much that he's finally reached something approaching superstar status. ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He dumped his father, Floyd Sr., who trained him through part of his amateur career and during his early professional career, and took up with his uncle, Roger. He is now self-managed (having parted ways with James Prince in '03), but is advised by Al Hayman and Leonard Ellerbe. His relations with his past promoter, Bob Arum, and with HBO, have always been volatile, but despite all this and periodic legal troubles, he has held it all together in the ring. Not least of which because of his dedication to staying in shape and training extremely hard for every one of his fights. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: It depends on whether he carries out his promise to retire (and for how long he stays retired). Mayweather is at his peak at the age of 30 and probably still has several more outstanding years left. The lure of a return with De La Hoya may be hard to resist, but in a way, the more interesting challenges lie at welterweight: Shane Mosley, Miguel Cotto, and Ricky Hatton. ***Grade: A***

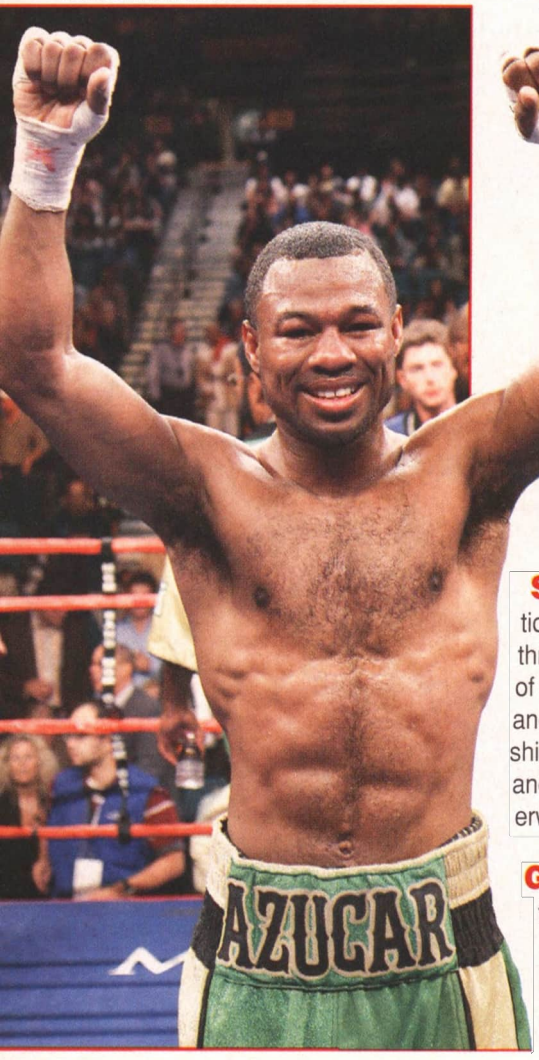
ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Shane Mosley

44-4 (37), with 1 no-contest

TALENT: After winning just one out of six between '01 and '05, Mosley has returned to form, with five-straight victories—in increasingly impressive style. A hard-fought, eye-damage TKO of Fernando Vargas was followed with a one-sided knockout win over Vargas, and then, after returning to welterweight, a one-sided points win over Luis Collazo, who had previously come within a disputed whisker of beating Ricky Hatton. The 5'8" Sugar Shane may no longer have the amazing speed of his 1996-2001 peak, but he's still one of the quickest around. He was too small for Winky Wright at junior middle (although he held Winky to a split decision in their return fight), but has found his niche back at 147 pounds, where his blend of superior defensive skill, power, bodypunching skill, experience, and his sound chin make him an extremely formidable fighting machine. ***Grade: A***

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO



ACHIEVEMENT: Mosley was one of the outstanding lightweights of the modern era—unbeaten at the weight, with eight defenses of the IBF belt, all won inside the distance. Victims included Philip Holiday, John-John Molina, and Jesse James Leija. He skipped junior welterweight to move to welter, where he pulled off an upset by becoming the first man to genuinely outpoint Oscar De La Hoya. After three impressive stoppage defenses, he came unstuck against Vernon Forrest, the start of a bleak three-year period, with the only highpoint a unanimous but disputed return win over De La Hoya. But his impressive wins over Vargas and Collazo have put him firmly back in the saddle and have confirmed his status as one of the best fighters of his era. ***Grade: A+***

MARKETABILITY: He's never had anything close to the pulling power of De La Hoya—not even after beating Oscar—but the likeable Sugar Shane remains a popular and highly respected figure whose scope has been widened by his business association with Golden Boy Promotions. What he really needs, however, is a big-name opponent to generate big-fight excitement. ***Grade: A***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Sugar Shane has always been a superbly conditioned athlete who lives the quiet life outside the ring. The only black mark came through his alleged association with the notorious Balco organization, a supplier of illegal, performance-enhancing drugs to various athletes. But that's in the past, and he's now back with his father, Jack Mosley, as his trainer and their relationship seems to be working better than ever. Mosley is managed by his wife, Jin, and his status within Golden Boy Promotions offers him a fast track that might otherwise be lacking. ***Grade: A+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Even at 35, he could well have several big fights left in him. It all depends on Golden Boy Promotions securing him the right kind of opponents. What he really needs is a tasty assignment at welterweight—he'd certainly present problems for Mayweather, and might currently be favored against the likes of Miguel Cotto, Paul Williams, Antonio Margarito, and Ricky Hatton. ***Grade: A***

Miguel Cotto

29-0 (24)

TALENT: Assessments of the short career of the Puerto Rican hero have gone through three stages. Early in his career, as he marched through the junior welterweight division, he was spoken of in terms of awe and wonder. Then he was wobbled by DeMarcus Corley and dropped and badly rocked by Ricardo Torres, and he began to be seen as chinny and defensively vulnerable. Finally, he moved up to welterweight, and freed from the strain of weight-making, delivered an exceptional performance against Carlos Quintana followed by a workmanlike one against Oktay Urkal, causing the assessment to settle somewhere between those poles. The 5'7" WBA titleholder is a heavy-handed precision boxer. He does not have the quickest hands in the game, but his timing and accuracy are commendable, his defense is usually tight, he's invariably stronger than the opposition, and he knows how to counter. He has a cool, unflustered approach, hits extremely hard with both hands, and is particularly potent with his body attack. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: His long and impressive amateur career ended at the 2000 Sydney Olympics when he dropped a dubious decision to eventual gold medalist Muhammad Abdullaev in his first fight. He went on to demolish Abdullaev and another amateur conqueror, Kelson Pinto, in the professional ranks, where he made fairly rapid progress at first. Aside from this pair, Cotto's 27 junior welterweight victims included Corley, Torres, Lovemore Ndou, Carlos Maussa, Randall Bailey, and Pauli Malignaggi. His unbeaten countryman Quintana, who was fresh from an upset win over Joel Julio, was also a decent scalp. All respectable enough, but no superfights among them. In fact, no fights where he entered as the underdog, and, until Zab Judah, no opponents who seemed to represent a serious threat. ***Grade: B+***

MARKETABILITY: He's one of the major stars in Bob Arum's promotional stable and is marketed accordingly, regularly fighting in Puerto Rico, where he's a public figure of considerable renown, but also fighting in New York and New Jersey. His fan base is clearly expanding, not least because of HBO exposure, but it would grow even faster if he improved his English. ***Grade: A***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He's a dedicated athlete who has good people around him—his uncle Evangelista, who trains and manages him, and his father, also Miguel Angel, in a supporting role, with Bob Arum's Top Rank pulling out all the stops and matching him carefully. ***Grade: A+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He has huge opportunities and huge risks at welterweight. He really needs a Hatton, Mosley, or Mayweather to take him to the next level, but each of these men represent a considerable risk to his future, and against Pretty Boy Floyd, he'd be the underdog by several lengths. More likely, in the short term, is that he will face the winner of the Antonio Margarito-Paul Williams showdown, who would also present significant danger to his record. ***Grade: A***

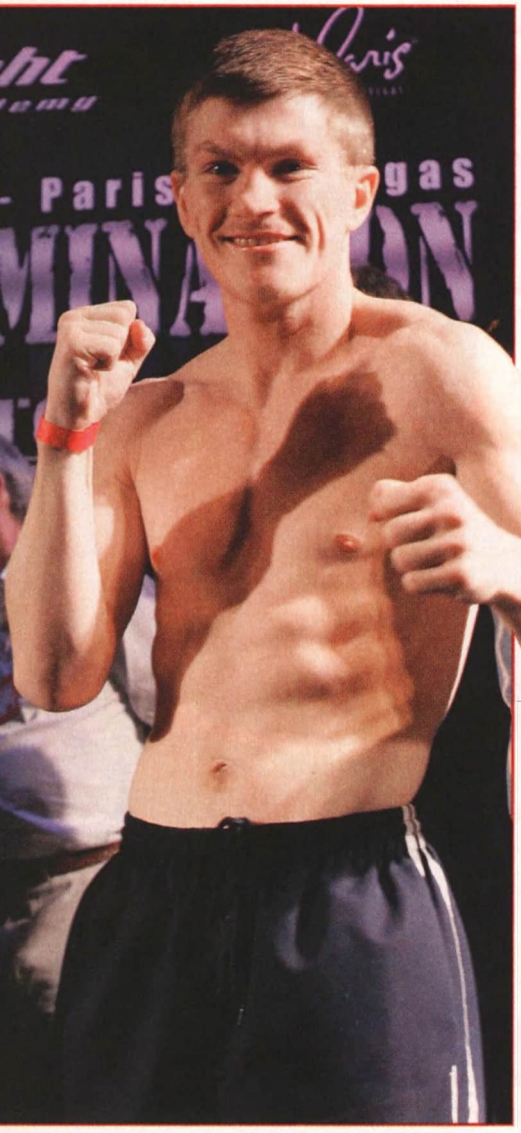
PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Ricky Hatton

42-0 (30)

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES



TALENT: That 11th-round victory over Kostya Tszyu should give an indication of his potential, but in subsequent fights, against significantly lower grade opposition, Hatton went off the boil, raising the possibility either that he was flattered by his win over the 36-year-old world champion or that he was in decline. The short-armed, broad-shouldered 5'7" dynamo is an extremely aggressive fighter who uses his strength and stamina to crowd opponents, weakening them with an incessant body attack, overwhelming them with his volume of blows, and a range of dirty tactics. But as shown several times, he is no slouch when it comes to basic boxing skills—for example, jabbing and moving (at least in the early rounds) against the powerful Juan Urango. "The Hitman" takes a good punch (down just once), but is prone to cuts. His main drawback, however, is his inclination towards beer swilling and pie eating between fights, which will eventually erode his physical gifts, if it hasn't done so already. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: In 43 fights, the only man to come close to beating him was Luis Collazo, but that was in Hatton's maiden venture at welterweight last year when Hatton was wobbled in the final round and some felt he deserved to lose. Prior to 2005, his career was marked by extremely cautious matchmaking, his biggest wins coming against Vince Phillips, Ben Tackie, and Ray Oliveira, each well past their best. But he insisted on the Tszyu fight and pulled it off after a titanic struggle. After that, he broke with his promoter, Frank Warren, and talked of Pretty Boy Floyd, but instead settled for Carlos Maussa, Collazo, Urango, and finally, Jose Luis Castillo. He's been legitimately accused of avoiding a showdown with British WBC titleholder Junior Witter and has yet to make serious moves in the direction of Mayweather or Cotto. ***Grade: A-***

MARKETABILITY: He let things slip by not capitalizing on the momentum of his surprise victory over Tszyu, but deserves credit for forgoing the comforts of his fanatical Manchester home base to build his name in America. Hatton is a household name in Britain, and with HBO behind him, could become a significant force in U.S. boxing, provided he keeps on winning in impressive style. ***Grade: A***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Billy Graham, who manages to get him into magnificent shape for each fight despite his less-than-exemplary lifestyle, has superbly trained Hatton throughout his career. Hatton is managed by his father, Ray Hatton, and, ever since splitting from Warren, has been promoted by Dennis Hobson in the U.K. and Art Pellulo in The U.S., and backed by HBO. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At 28, Hatton may already be in decline, but could still have several big fights in his future. Victory over Castillo would set him up for more enticing challenges against Mayweather, Cotto, or Mosley, but don't be surprised if he stays at junior welter and settles for less. If that's the case, there is no excuse to continuing avoiding Witter, but don't hold your breath. ***Grade: B+***

Juan Diaz

32-0 (16)

TALENT: The "Baby Bull" rose above the lightweight pack with his emphatic win over Acelino Freitas in Las Vegas on April 28, when his incessant attack forced the Brazilian to retire after eight rounds. The 23-year-old Mexico-born, Houston-based buzzsaw has certainly proved himself the premier Diaz (the others are IBF titlist Julio Diaz and WBC boss David Diaz), but more than that he is beginning to establish himself as a future big-money star. Although not a huge puncher, his approach involves high-intensity attacking, primarily on the inside or at middle range. He's aggressive and extremely busy, but there is also a high level of skill in his swarming approach, and he is not easy to tag. He also takes a good punch, absorbing several full-blooded bangs from the hard-hitting Freitas without wobbling. The 5'6" WBA beltholder carries what is generously called puppy fat around his midriff—suggesting that he should be able to make 135 pounds for several years to come. But despite his lack of muscular definition, he is always in magnificent condition, which is why he is able to sustain such a high workrate. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: After a 105-5 amateur career, he discovered he was too young for the Olympic career and so, instead, turned professional at the age of 16, initially ranging between welterweight and junior welter before settling at lightweight. The level of opposition was gradually raised and in 2004, at the age of 20, he challenged WBA titlist Lavka Sim, winning a wide, unanimous decision. He has since made eight defenses, his best opponents including Freitas, the then-unbeaten Jose Miguel Cotto (brother of Miguel Cotto), and former WBA titleholder Julien Lorcy. ***Grade: B***

MARKETABILITY: Diaz is well-spoken, engaging, a pre-law major at the University of Houston, and claims to be asleep by 10 p.m. each night so that he can be fresh for the next day's study and training. Despite his lack of one-punch knockout power, he has an exciting, all-action style. Now that he's beaten Freitas, he has become one of the major stars in Don Kings empire and could become a major HBO attraction. ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: His manager and head trainer Willie Savannah (who is assisted by Ronnie Shields) brought him along at a slow pace at first—slower than Baby Bull would have liked—but it all seems to have paid off. He is now being vigorously promoted by King, having previously been part of the Main Events stable. ***Grade: A***

FUTURE PROSPECTS: Diaz has made it clear that his goal is to unify the lightweight title and then move up to take on Ricky Hatton, although the proposed next step is a fight with THE RING champion Joel Casamayor (unjustly stripped of the WBC belt), which is probably the most difficult option around. Other potential candidates include those other men with the Diaz name—David and Julio. ***Grade: A***

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Colin Bain ducks under a long jab from Amir Khan. The British Olympic hero is unbeaten, but has yet to face serious opposition in the professional ranks.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Amir Khan

12-0 (9)

TALENT: The 20-year-old has done everything expected of him, but the standard of his professional opposition has been exceptionally low. The 5'10" Khan is big for a lightweight, which has given him an advantage over his opponents, mostly junior lightweights. He's wonderfully athletic with blistering quickness of foot and hand, throws his punches in rapid-fire combinations, usually from long range, while using a sharp jab to create the openings, and a right cross to close the show. He's not heavy-handed, but such is his timing, speed, accuracy, and punch-volume that he gets quick results (all his stoppages have come within three rounds). He's also developing into a mean body-puncher. He has sharp reflexes but sometimes leaves himself open to counters. He was officially knocked down by Rachid Drilzane in his 10th fight (more of a stumble) and was dropped by Craig Watson in one of his last amateur fights, raising questions about his chin. **Grade: B+**

ACHIEVEMENT: After winning Olympic silver as a 17-year-old, he avenged his final defeat against Cuba's Mario Kindelan and turned professional under Frank Warren, who has taken him along far slower than Naseem Hamed a decade earlier. Hamed was European champion and a top contender after 12 fights; Khan has been kept in cotton wool. He's been calling out local rivals like Jon Thaxton, John Murray, and Kevin Mitchell, but his next fight will be against the less-threatening Commonwealth champion, Willie Limond. So far, Khan's toughest outing was the 10-round points win against the 10-3 (0) Frenchman, Drilzane. **Grade: B-**

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: With the possible exception of Ricky Hatton, Khan is the biggest name in British boxing. He captured the public's imagination with his Olympic performances and has since emerged as one of Britain's most recognizable sportsmen. His role as a patriotic British Muslim is much admired. All of his fights are screened on terrestrial television (ITV), which has helped to keep him in the public eye. The only drawback is that the crowds are becoming frustrated with the level of his opponents. **Grade: A+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Khan's close-knit Bolton family has helped him keep his feet on the ground, and despite some questionable behavior behind the wheel and misplaced boasts about what he could do to his rivals, he remains a likeable young man, who stays in shape and trains hard. His trainer, Oliver Harrison, has built on his amateur skills and while his promoter, Warren, has been criticized for over-cautious matchmaking, it's too early to say whether this approach is a mistake. It might be that the 20-year-old is simply not ready for anything more threatening. **Grade: A**

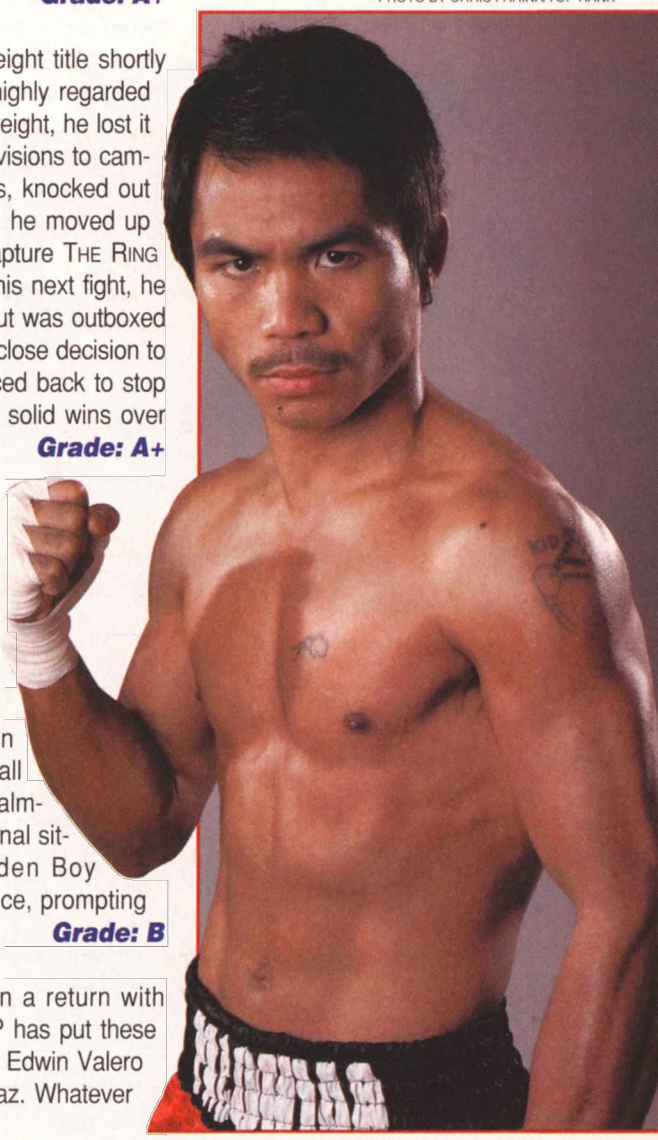
GROWTH POTENTIAL: After Limond in July, the British boxing public will expect something tastier. The 32-7 (17) British champion Thaxton or the 21-0 (11) British Prospect of the Year Murray would both be worthy options. More likely, however, is that the slow advance will continue, which would create frustration from boxer and public alike. **Grade: A**

Manny Pacquiao

44-3-2 (35)

TALENT: "Pac-Man" is generally considered the world's number-two fighter, but there is a growing perspective that he is closing in on number one. Earlier in his career, the mercurial Filipino southpaw was a bit wild, but under the tutelage of Freddie Roach he has shown consistent improvement, not least in terms of footwork and balance, and defensive skills more generally, without losing any of his tenacity. He's also fast, accurate, and has impeccable timing, a firm chin, has the experience of 12 professional years mostly at elite level, and a work level second to none. Despite having started out seven divisions down, at strawweight, the 5'6" 28-year-old with the Bruce Lee body is extremely strong at junior lightweight and has carried his power with him. He has every punch in the book and throws them in blistering combinations. ***Grade: A+***

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK



ACHIEVEMENT: Starting out at 16, he won the WBC flyweight title shortly before his 20th birthday by traveling to Thailand to knock out the highly regarded homeboy, Catchai Sasakul. However, severely drained by making weight, he lost it on a third-round knockout in his second defense. He skipped two divisions to campaign at junior featherweight, and after a series of impressive wins, knocked out South Africa's Lehlo Ledwaba for the IBF title. After four defenses, he moved up again to pull off a one-sided win over Marco Antonio Barrera to capture THE RING featherweight title, forcing the Mexican to retire after 11 rounds. In his next fight, he dropped Juan Manuel Marquez three times in the opening round, but was outboxed down the stretch and held to a draw. Two fights later, he dropped a close decision to Erik Morales in a bid for the WBC junior lightweight title, but bounced back to stop Morales twice in 2006 and further consolidated his reputation with solid wins over Oscar Larios and Jorge Solis. ***Grade: A+***

MARKETABILITY: The extraordinary level of Pacquiao's popularity in the Philippines outstrips that of any other boxer from any other country. It extends deep into the country's popular culture (movies, music, advertisements) and politics. He is also a huge draw in Mexico, the United States, and his fights attract interest all over the world. ***Grade: A+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: After beating Barrera, Pac-Man developed a reputation as a wild man outside the ring—drinking, all night reveling, illegitimate children—but he has shown signs of calming down, partly through the influence of Roach. Still, his promotional situation remains complicated. In 2006 he signed with Golden Boy Promotions, but then returned to Bob Arum, against Roach's advice, prompting GBP to sue. ***Grade: B***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Pacquiao best interests lie in a return with Marquez, or with Barrera. However, his decision to break with GBP has put these fights out of reach for the moment. Other interesting options include Edwin Valero and Joan Guzman, or a move up to lightweight to take on Juan Diaz. Whatever way it goes, he'll be raking it in for a while to come. ***Grade: A***

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

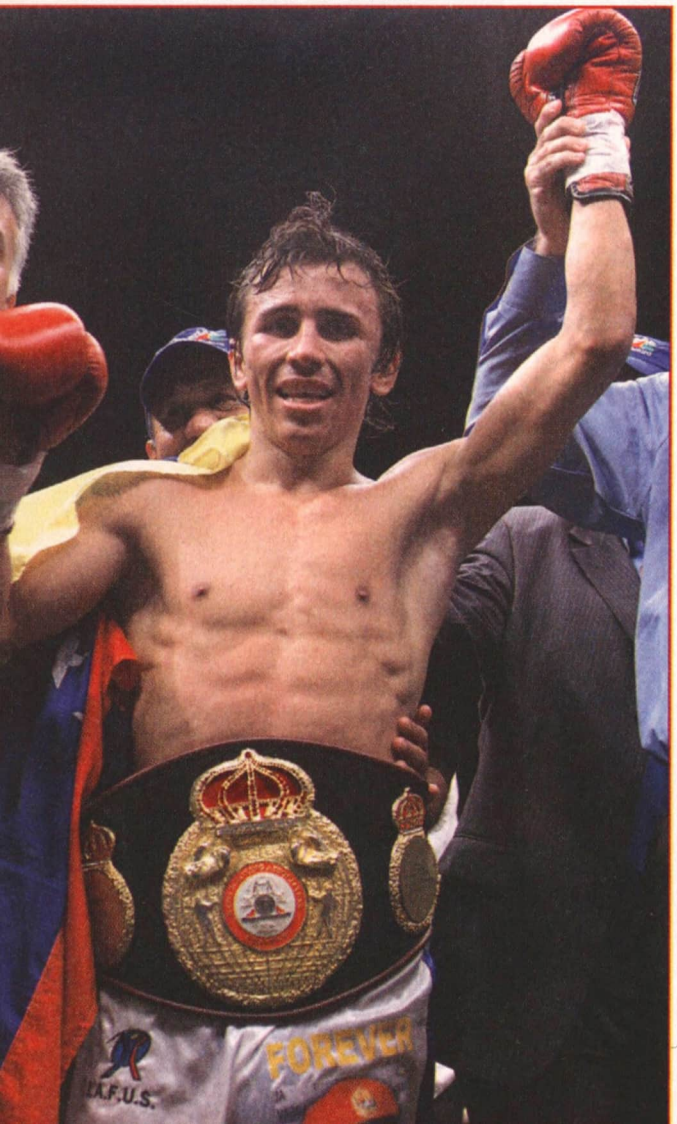
Edwin Valero

22-0 (22)

TALENT: There is no doubt that the 5'7" 25-year-old Venezuelan junior lightweight is one of the big hitters of world boxing. Not only has the southpaw stopped all his opponents, he's finished 19 in the first round. He's exceptionally strong for a 130-pounder, throws a high volume of punches, and they are all extremely hard. He's also quick and agile and has a good jab when he bothers to use it, which is not very often. He's still raw and lacks experience at the elite level. He stands too upright and tends to lift his head when charging in, leaving himself open, and does most of his swinging from longer range, neglecting infighting. When winning the WBA title from Vicente Mosquera, he was dropped in the third before prevailing in the 10th. **Grade: B+**

ACHIEVEMENT: He started as a 12-year-old and claims an 86-6 (45) amateur record, including three national titles and a Central and South American title (beating "Panchito" Bojado). He turned professional at the age of 20, and after eight fights on the home circuit, broke through in the United States and was signed by Golden Boy Promotions. Progress was delayed by a failed MRI brain scan in 2004 (the result of a motorcycle accident back in 2001, when he sustained a fractured scull and had surgery to remove a blood clot). He was banned from boxing in the U.S. and was inactive for 17 months. He has since fought at home, as well as in Japan, Panama, and France, and uses Tokyo as his base. He beat the capable Mosquera for the WBA title and has since made two defences against moderate opposition. **Grade: B-**

PHOTO BY TERESITA CHAVARRIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



MARKETABILITY: If he could get past the U.S. ban, he would be extremely marketable, at least for as long as he continues winning, but for the time being that remains a significant drawback. His thrilling style and enormous power are box office gold, and he's fighting in one of boxing's most talented divisions. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: This was severely disrupted by his failed brain scan in 2004, but he has regrouped in Japan, where he has been managed and promoted by Teiken promotions, which are trying to get past the ban to secure him a big fight in the U.S.A. He lives in Tokyo with his wife and two children and is still trained by Jorge Zerpa. Unfortunately, boxer and trainer appear too deeply in love with power, which has come at the expense of technique. **Grade: B**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: This depends on three things: first, whether he gets a license to box in the U.S.; second, whether he can secure some big-name opposition; third, whether he remembers to keep his chin down when facing the elite. There are several thrilling options out there for Valero—Pacquiao, Marquez, Barrera, Guzman—but at the moment he does not appear to have more than a puncher's chance against any of them. **Grade: A**

Juan Manuel Marquez

47-3-1 (35)

TALENT: There are two ways of viewing the older Marquez: as a brilliant boxer-puncher who is finally receiving his due after too long in the wilderness, or as a talented but flawed underachiever who lacks the extra ingredients for superstar status. Evidence for the former view comes from his outstanding victory over Marco Antonio Barrera, and before that from his come-from-behind draw against Manny Pacquiao, which some felt he deserved to win. Those taking the other view point to controversies in those two showings—the missed knockdown he suffered against Barrera and judge Bert Clements' error in the Pacquiao fight (when Clements should have scored the first round against Marquez by 10-6, which would have made the Pac-Man the winner). They also point to the unanimous points losses he suffered against Chris John and Fred Norwood. Either way, it is hard not to be impressed by the Mexican's blend of sharp counterpunching, controlled power, head-shifting defensive prowess, and his refined sense of time and distance. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: Before the Barrera win, his victims included Victor Polo, Derrick Gainer, Manuel Medina, and Robbie Peden—strong showings, but none career-defining. The loss to Norwood for the WBA featherweight title in 1999 was a significant setback. An over-cautious Marquez struggled with the American's elusive southpaw style and lost by margins of five, four, and two points. The John loss, in Indonesia in 2006, was more controversial. Marquez was docked two points for repeated low blows, but this didn't affect the official result, and it seemed that, once again, Marquez had been put out of his stride by a slick, illusive boxer. But three subsequent victories suggest a return to peak form. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: Until meeting Barrera, he was very much Mexico's number three, but that has changed and he now has the muscle to secure a big-money return, or to bargain his way to a return with Pacquiao (which he bargained his way out of three years ago). ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: His manager and trainer, Ignacio Beristain, wrote the book on how to guide a boxer out of the big time. After the draw with Pacquiao, Marquez had the opportunity to break into the major league, but instead Beristain turned down the return fight offer, setting in motion a process that saw his man stripped of the WBA and IBF titles and losing to John in Indonesia for a pittance. Nevertheless, it turned out just fine because the split with Top Rank eventually put Marquez in position to accept the unexpected Barrera offer. It seems lessons have been learned. ***Grade: B***

GROWTH POTENIAL: Marquez turns 34 in August, but has several juicy options ahead. He would go into a return with Barrera as the favorite, but victory would nevertheless enhance his status. He would be the underdog against Pacquiao, but victory would transform him into a Mexican superstar. Other possibilities include a return with John at featherweight or, at junior light, Edwin Valero and Joan Guzman. ***Grade: A***

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/HBO

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Chris John

39-0-1 (20)

PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

TALENT: There are several misconceptions about the world's leading featherweight: that he's one of those over-protected foreigners who never leaves home; that he's impossible to beat because his fanatical crowd intimidates the judges, and that he was the beneficiary of a robbery against Juan Manuel Marquez. First, he won the title in Japan, defended it in Australia, where he currently trains, says he wants to fight in America, and from the names of his victims, is by no means over-protected; second the Indonesian press and fans are, if anything, overly critical. Third, he beat Marquez by margins of six points (twice) and four points, and each of the judges and the referee were neutral. Most ringside observers made it far closer, but the decision was hardly outrageous. John landed more punches, Marquez' were harder—it depended on which style you favored. The 5'8" Indonesian is extremely fast on his feet and evasive, with quick, busy hands, a tight defense, and the confidence that comes from making six successful defenses over a three-year WBA title reign. On the other hand, "The Dragon" lacks major-league power and has been dropped three times. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: After 32 wins, John won the so-called WBA "interim" belt with a split decision over Colombia's Oscar Leon in 2003. When Marquez was stripped of the title, John became the beltholder and traveled to Japan to outbox Osamu Satu. Two defenses later, he outclassed Derrick Gainer, and then ventured to Australia to stop Tommy Browne in 10, after which he won wider recognition against Marquez. The only blemish on his record is a technical draw against Jose Rojas in '04, but, last time out, he dropped Rojas twice to win a wide unanimous decision, and is now unbeaten in 40. It looks impressive, but he really needs to venture to the United States to move to the next level. **Grade: A**

MARKETABILITY: John, who was also a gold medalist in the Indonesian Wu shu (a kung fu-like martial art) championship, has steadily built his standing at home during the course of a nine-year career, and has won over the doubters, raising his status as a major public figure who transcends the sport. He is also popular in Japan and Australia, but despite his win over Marquez, is an unknown quantity in America or Europe. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He started boxing at the age of six, trained by his father, and went on to become one of the leading amateurs in Southeast Asia before turning professional at the age of 16, managed and trained by former professional Sutan Rambing. In '05 they split, and he joined Craig Christian in Perth, Australia. The highly dedicated, clean-living John has since shown steady improvement, but he clearly needs wider exposure. **Grade: B+**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: The ideal scenario for John would be to travel to the United States and take on Marquez in the return encounter he insists he will win. Other possibilities include Oscar Larios and Robert Guerrero. **Grade: A**

Rafael Marquez

37-3 (33)

TALENT: Just like big brother Juan Manuel, Rafael finally broke through into something approaching the major league in 2007 thanks to his exciting win over Israel Vazquez to win THE RING junior featherweight title. The 5'5", 32-year-old had previously developed a reputation at bantamweight as one of the hardest punchers, pound-for-pound, in the world and his all-round boxing skills were also beginning to draw respectful reviews. But it was the move up in weight to take on the high-flying Vazquez that won him wider recognition. Despite suffering a third-round knockdown, he outboxed and outpunched the heavy-handed Vazquez and was ahead on points when the champion retired with a shattered nose after eight rounds. Aside from chilling power, Marquez has an educated jab and throws beautiful combinations. His left hook to the liver and his right cross to the chin are particularly potent. A possible drawback is his own chin—he was stopped three times during his first five years as a professional, including two clean knockout defeats. One of the reasons was his inclination to trade, leaving himself open, although he has since tightened up. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: The younger Marquez began to emerge in 2001 after winning a controversial split decision over Mark Johnson (who was deducted two points for constant holding). They fought again, and the second time the rapidly improving Mexican stopped the American in eight. In 2003, he broke the unbeaten record of highly regarded Tim Austin to win the IBF belt, coming from behind to land a huge right cross that sent the titlist out of the ring in the eighth round. It was a big win, particularly since Austin was a 4-1 favorite, making his 10th defense. Marquez defended seven times, mostly against decent opposition, including Mauricio Pastrana (twice) and Silence Mabuza (twice) before moving up to stop Vazquez. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: Until recently, he was living in the shadow of his older brother, but the exciting victory over Vasquez and Juan Manuel's over Barrera have taken them both to a higher plain. In fact, there is now talk of them being the best boxing brothers in the sport's history. Rafael is now one of the major drawing cards in the lighter weights. ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: The dedicated and superbly conditioned Rafael is managed and trained by Ignacio Beristain, who has done an excellent job in developing both brothers as boxers, but has not been quite so hot when it comes to management (although his decisions have been less idiosyncratic than with Juan Manuel). Many of his fights are broadcast by Showtime, which regards him as one of its star attractions. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: A return with Vazquez could take Marquez even further, provided he wins again. Other interesting options include talented IBF titlist Steve Molitor (who wants the fight), popular Irishman Bernard Dunne, and fellow Mexican Daniel Ponce De Leon. The drawback is that, at age 32, time may be running out for Marquez. ***Grade: A*** ■

Gavin Evans is a British freelance writer and a regular contributor to THE RING.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO\

AFTER MAKING MILLIONS AGAINST OSCAR...

NOW IT'S TIME FOR TO MAKE THE

"PRETTY BOY" FANS HAPPY

By Ivan Goldman

Floyd Mayweather positively lusts for a rematch with Oscar De La Hoya. He started planting the seeds almost as soon as they pulled his gloves off from the first one. Within days he was sending out such desperate, plaintive signals, it was almost embarrassing to watch. And this time he wasn't the brash, name-calling Floyd of HBO's 24/7

Due to the record-shattering revenue generated by his fight with De La Hoya, Mayweather knows that a rematch with "The Golden Boy" is the biggest payday available to him right now, but most hardcore fans would rather see him tangle with other opponents.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

If there is a rematch, De La Hoya will have to put more leverage behind his bodyshots if he is going to have a chance of reversing the outcome. The first time, he scored with blows to the body, but they were mainly arm punches and had little effect.

series, the one who was promising to destroy the fans' beloved "Golden Boy."

No, he'd molted into a brand-new, respectful, flattering Floyd who, he said, only wanted to give the fans what they wanted, another great match between two great fighters. So *please, pretty please, aging Oscar who fights maybe once a year and runs out of gas halfway through a 12-rounder, get back in the ring with me so I can rake in another $25-million or so.*

Well, that's one plan. But here's another. Clean out the rest of the welterweight division—Sugar Shane Mosley, Miguel Cotto, the winner of Antonio Margarito-Paul Williams, and maybe the loser too, if he puts on a good show. And nobody would call Kermit Cintron or Joshua Clottey easy marks either.

That's right, Pretty Boy. You're telling us you're the greatest ever, greater than Joe Louis, both Sugar Rays, Muhammad Ali, etc. Well, those guys fought everybody. Max Schmeling, Sonny Liston, Jake LaMotta, Roberto Duran, Tommy Hearns. Remember Hearns? He was ringside when you beat Oscar. Tommy would never run around bragging about winning a split decision. If his opponent wasn't on the canvas when the fight ended, he figured he'd screwed up.

"There's no way either Mayweather or De La Hoya could beat Hearns in his prime," THE RING's European correspondent, Brian Doogan, declared over a recent lunch in Los Angeles. And forget about Sugar Ray Leonard. But there's a way Mayweather could change the mind of Doogan and the legions of experts and fans alike who agree with him.

Before a bout, Pretty Boy Floyd invariably promises to wade in like a cannon-firing Bradley Fighting Vehicle. He is one brash, trash-talking dude. But on fight night he tends to throw one, maybe two punches at a time for 12 rounds, as he did against Oscar until the last 10 seconds of the last round. But in the meantime, trying to hit him is like being at the wrong end of a carnival game. The remarkably talented Mayweather hones his razor-sharp athletic skills with plenty of old-fashioned gym sweat, as even his harshest critics would be the first to admit.

A rematch with Oscar isn't a terrible idea. But right now Floyd's got other pressing business. He isn't really a junior middleweight anyway. He went up the scale only to chase Oscar dollars, which have oh so many zeros at the end. But the welterweight division, where Mayweather belongs, makes Murder Incorporated look like a sewing circle. And he's already torn a triumphant path through some of it.

Indestructible Carlos Baldomir barely laid a glove on him. Zab Judah, the tricky southpaw who Baldomir contends is even faster than Mayweather, started out beautifully, but eventually got so disgusted with the flow of events he tried to foul his way out of there. Lion-hearted

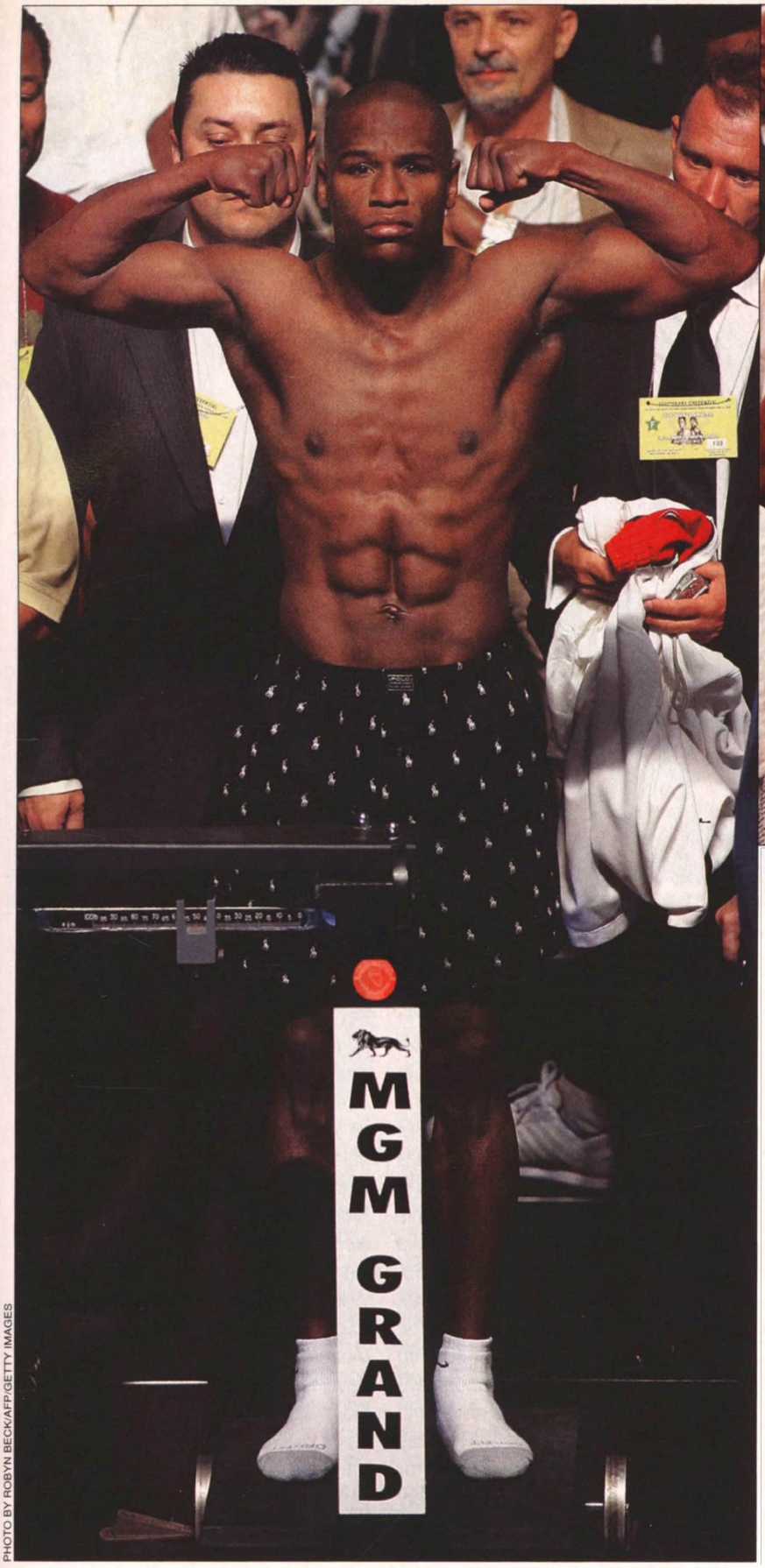


PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Although he weighed 150 pounds for the De La Hoya match, Mayweather, who holds THE RING welterweight title, has a lot of attractive competition back down at 147 pounds.

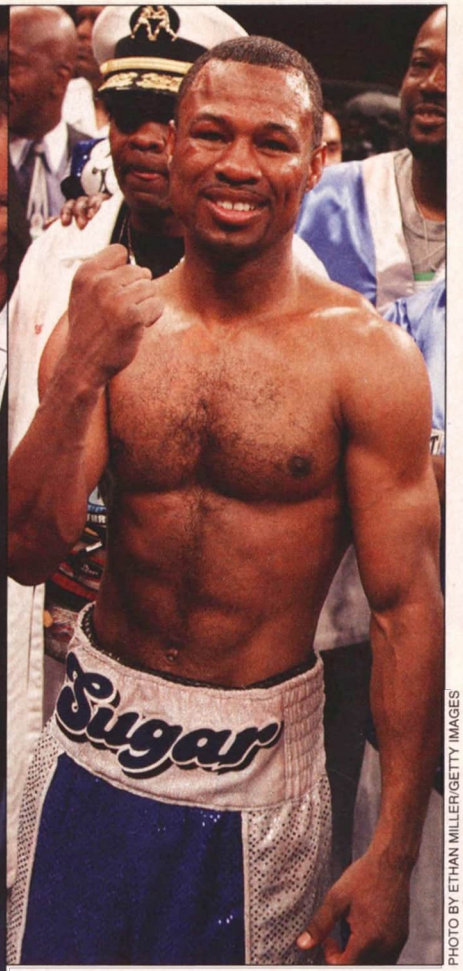


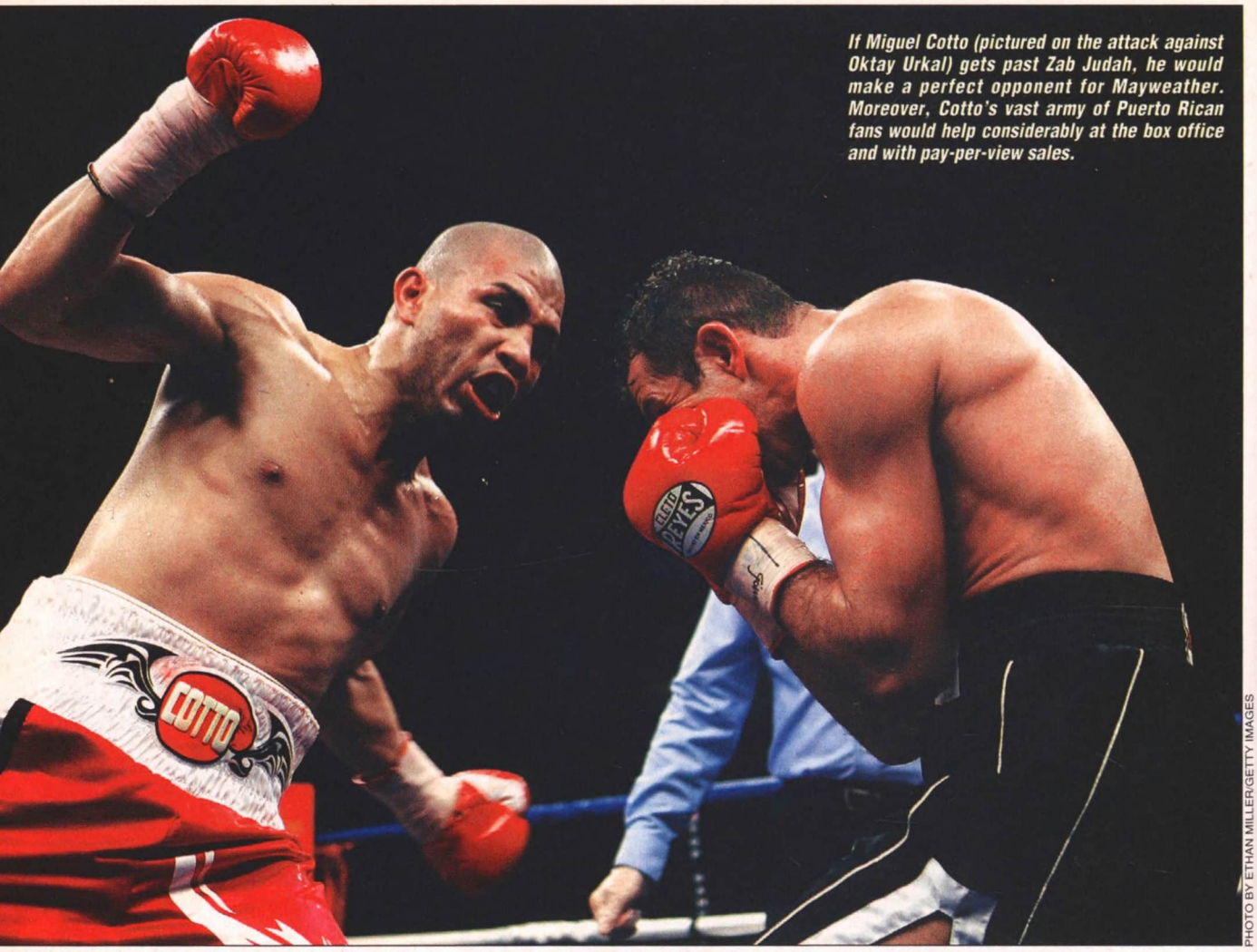
PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The man many would like to see get a crack at Mayweather is Shane Mosley, who served as one of De La Hoya's sparring partners when "The Golden Boy" was prepping for Floyd. Sugar Shane is a shade quicker and more versatile than Oscar, which certainly wouldn't hurt his chances of pulling an upset.

Sharmba Mitchell got destroyed. That's Mayweather's entire welterweight resume. Before that, he fought only three times at junior welter, stopping Arturo Gatti and Henry Bruseles, and decisioning DeMarcus Corley. He'd previously gone through the junior lightweight and lightweight divisions like a wrecking ball, which accounts for his record of 38-0 (24). Mayweather didn't become the Number One fighter pound-for-pound by faking it.

If Pretty Boy were to outfight Mosley, Cotto, Margarito, and Williams, who knows, maybe he'd build up enough of a fan base to get some of the crowd on his side against De La Hoya.

Unlike Roy Jones, who in his own prime was a pound-for-pound best showing very similar skills, Mayweather does lose rounds. Sometimes he comes out



If Miguel Cotto (pictured on the attack against Oktay Urkal) gets past Zab Judah, he would make a perfect opponent for Mayweather. Moreover, Cotto's vast army of Puerto Rican fans would help considerably at the box office and with pay-per-view sales.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

after the opening bell looking oddly unconcerned, as though the first few rounds don't matter because he's so certain to triumph after he's got his man completely figured out. Of course, so far, he's been right.

Anyone who can slip and slide away from punches with Mayweather's almost superhuman dexterity would be nuts if he didn't use what he knows. But after making the guy miss, you're supposed to make him pay, and Mayweather rarely makes him pay enough. If he does in fact decide to skim the rest of the cream off the top of the welterweight division, he should do it throwing combinations. That's what all those super fighters did in the past, the ones he compares himself to.

Just how does Mayweather match up with his potential opposition? If that lucrative De La Hoya match took place, it's worth noting Oscar will be 35 in February. Even if Mayweather were to fight him next, the aging process would almost certainly be kinder to 30-year-old Mayweather than to De La Hoya.

But Oscar had plenty of moments in their first match, and it's possible he could find more the second time around. He's tough. He was able to absorb Mayweather's shots, drive him back to the ropes, and rough him up a bit too. But trying to keep up with Floyd's speed, De La Hoya sacrificed power. In the fourth round, Oscar held his opponent with his right while he slammed nine left hooks to the liver, landing most of them. But they weren't the kind of hooks that took out Ricardo Mayorga.

Oscar, a man who's been fighting more than 25 years, forgot fundamentals. He didn't leverage those shots with his legs, the way he knows how, the way his Golden Boy Promotions partner Marco Antonio Barrera does with every bodyshot he throws. You could say Oscar lost the fight right there. If Oscar wants to change the outcome of a rematch, he must correct that mistake.

As for Mayweather, he doesn't have to change a thing to beat De La Hoya. But instead of repeating an identical strategy, he should study Hearns tapes and mimic what "The Hit Man" used to do after he connected. In milliseconds he threw another—and another.

When you've reached Mayweather's stature, you can expect a superhuman effort from all challengers. De La Hoya, Mosley, Cotto, Margarito, and Williams would all try to press Mayweather, creating fan-pleasing contests. Even beanpole Williams, with his great reach, would try to get close and rough him up. Mosley, though he turns 36 in September, may have the best shot to win. After tasting Mayweather's speed, many of his opponents wind up doing not much of anything because they can't find anything that works. Mosley won't do that. He's got plenty of speed himself, and though Mosley can get befuddled by, say, a grabby Vernon Forrest, Mayweather is a dancer, not a clincher. Mosley, a textbook

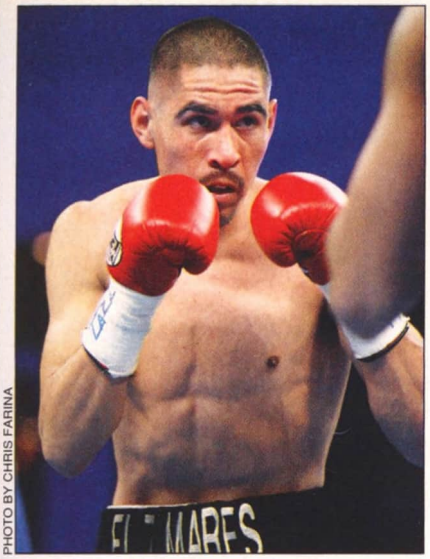


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Another pair for consideration: The winner of the July 14 bout between Antonio Margarito (above) and Paul "The Punisher" Williams (below) would also make an excellent adversary for Mayweather.

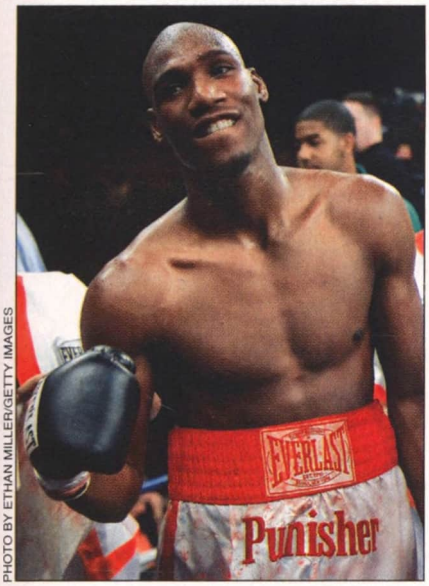


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

performer, would try shooting punches up and down, sometimes being first, sometimes countering, the way it's supposed to be done. Not that it will necessarily work, because he's never fought anyone with Mayweather's talent.

Unlike Oscar, Mosley doesn't wait for a fight contract before going to the gym. He's in there all the time anyway, which is one reason why he consented to be De La Hoya's principal sparring partner before the Mayweather fight. And Mosley doesn't tire easily. Though the general public would pay out more bucks for De La Hoya-Mayweather II, most hardcore fans probably prefer to see Floyd try to solve Sugar Shane, who's hungry for Floyd.

No other welterweight out there has been ducked more than Margarito. Mayweather has contended Margarito just doesn't attract enough fans to justify a match. Potential opponents have said that about Margarito for years, and the excuse gets more tiresome every year. Besides, he probably attracts as many fans as Mayweather, which is Mayweather's dirty little secret that's not so secret. He's not much of a draw.

Margarito does everything pretty well, but he's not phenomenally quick. He hurts people, can't be discouraged, and finds ways to win.

The sheer volume of Williams' punches is freaky. The commission should give him a thorough physical before his scheduled July 14 shootout with Margarito in Carson, California, just to make sure he's human. The best way to deal with Williams, 32-0 (24), is to punish his long torso to slow him down. Everybody can see that, but so far no one's been able to execute it. If Margarito can't, Mayweather probably can. But Williams is tough, determined, and only 25. He's probably still improving and could make lots of trouble for lots of fighters for years.

Miguel Cotto, 29-0 (24), is a fan's fighter, always in terrific fights. Like so many great sluggers, he has a shaky chin himself, which creates even more suspense. When Ricardo Torres got him in trouble during their great shootout in September 2005, Cotto just poured on more offense. Cotto says he's stronger at 147 pounds, and he looks it.

Cotto versus Mayweather, slugger pitted against boxer, could be the most entertaining fight Pretty Boy can make, and all those faithful Puerto Rican fans of Cotto would help at the gate.

It is possible Mayweather would turn every one of these potential match-ups into a dance, but it's not likely. Should Mayweather take these fighters on, the likely outcome is he'd beat them all, win fans, and actually achieve the greatness he's claimed prematurely.

Floyd, if it makes you happy to keep talking, do it—before each and every one of these fights. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.

DON'T MISS

RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

4748/05.06

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PACQUIAO VS. THE ALL-TIME GREATS

WE MATCH PAC-MAN AGAINST PEP, ARMSTRONG, SANCHEZ, AND MORE!

By William Dettloff

When an under-trained and distracted Manny Pacquiao stopped Jorge Solis in eight rounds in April, he reinforced the entirely accurate belief that the great fighters don't need to be in top form to beat lesser guys. Merely good fighters had better be ready to go almost regardless of who they're against—doing anything else

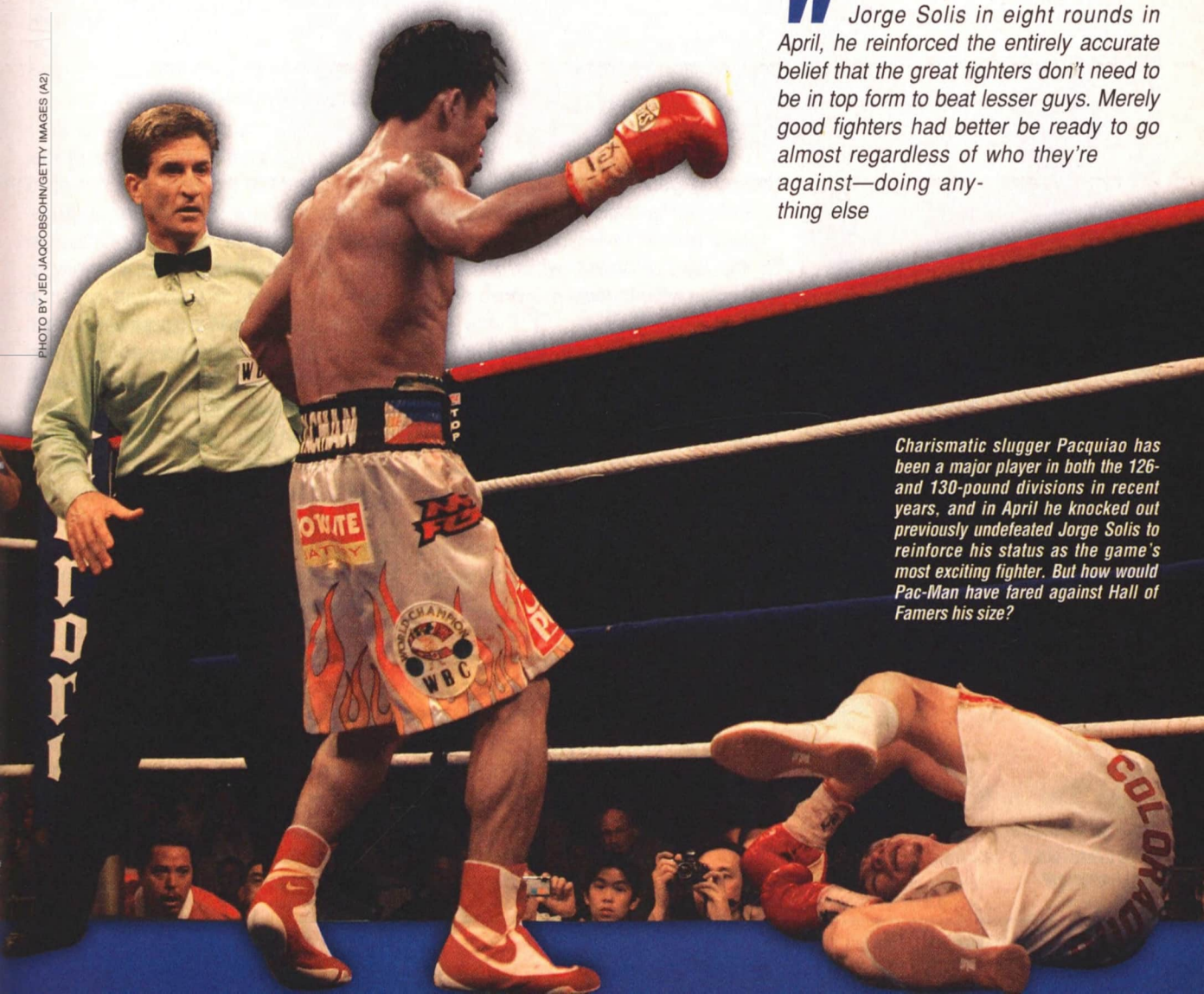


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES (A2)

Charismatic slugger Pacquiao has been a major player in both the 126- and 130-pound divisions in recent years, and in April he knocked out previously undefeated Jorge Solis to reinforce his status as the game's most exciting fighter. But how would Pac-Man have fared against Hall of Famers his size?

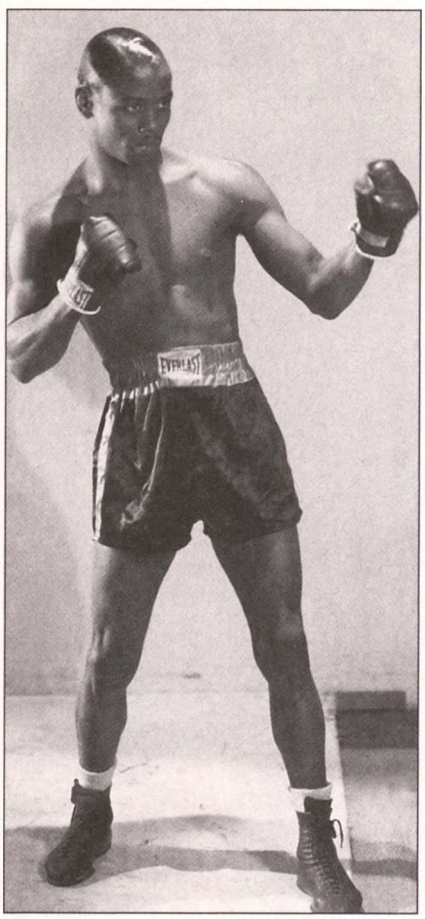
isn't worth the risk. Average fighters can't even slack off against other average guys. The great ones? They can coast against the right guys and still come out all right.

Of course, we didn't need to see Pacquiao stop Solis to know of his value as a dynamic, uniquely electrifying fighter whose presence in a ring, in a gym, on a street corner, immediately infuses the air with excitement. He's a rare fighter, his standing confirmed with victories over the most accomplished fighters around his weight and of the era, Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, and a draw with the third, Juan Manuel Marquez. The best news is this four-division titleholder isn't close yet to being done, and one imagines there is little he could do from this point on to sully the weight of his accomplishments.

It is a good time, then, to speculate how "Pac-Man" might have done against the other great fighters from history who fought at or around his weight. Remember that he's won titles at flyweight, junior featherweight, featherweight, and junior lightweight. But rather than hit each of those divisions, we chose to concentrate on 126 and 130, in part because of the many great fighters in the neighborhood, several of whom also won titles at both weights.

Bear in mind that as wonderful as he is, Pacquiao is not without flaws, some of them serious. He is not perfect, and great fighters know how to exploit imperfection. Remember too that the outcomes are not arrived at scientifically or through use of a computer program or tarot cards. They are based largely on another fight game truism: Styles make fights. And even a natural wonder like Pacquiao is subject to the laws of nature, which hold considerable weight, even in a prize ring.

Armstrong finally gets the better of Arizmendi in Los Angeles



Chocolate was a brilliant boxer with a great nickname

KID CHOCOLATE

136-10-6 (51)
New York State Athletic Commission Featherweight Titleholder (October 13, 1932-February 17, 1934)
World Junior Lightweight Champion (July 15, 1931-December 25, 1933)

Some guys get everything, and besides having one of the great names in the history of sport, Chocolate (whose other nickname, "The Havana Bob Bon," never quite caught on) had something else going for him: real brilliance. During an era full of wonderful featherweights and junior lightweights, he was clearly one of the best. His record is full of wins over such guys as Fidel LaBarba, Al Singer, Benny Bass, and Lew Feldman. He wasn't a big puncher, but he could outbox most of the best fighters of the day.

There were a couple of guys Chocolate could not beat. One was Jackie "Kid" Berg. The other was Tony Canzoneri. Canzoneri was a tireless, two-fisted buzzsaw who got on top of his man and kept his fists moving. He didn't have Pacquiao's pop, but he fought in a reasonably similar fashion, and Chocolate couldn't lick him.

It's hard to pick Chocolate when you know he really didn't have the stick to keep Pacquiao off of him. But boxers as good as Chocolate was—look at the record again—didn't lose to guys who make the kind of mistakes Pacquiao makes. If a frayed-at-the edges Erik Morales, never a greatly skilled fighter, was able to hold off Pacquiao the way he did in their first fight and half of the second, it's reasonable to think that Chocolate, a highly skilled technical fighter, would be able to do at least as much. Chocolate by decision.

HENRY ARMSTRONG

151-21-9 (101)
World Featherweight Champion (October 29, 1937-November 1938)
World Lightweight Champion (August 17, 1938-August 22, 1939)
World Welterweight World Champion (May 31, 1938-October 4, 1940)

Featherweight may have been Armstrong's best weight class. Yes, he holds the division record for title defenses at welterweight and it's the weight at which he scored many of his biggest wins. But featherweight is where Armstrong amassed his longest winning streaks and his longest kayo streaks. It stands to reason: If a guy is strong enough to stop welterweights and lightweights, he should run right over featherweights. This would not bode well for Pacquiao.

Pep snaps back Ray Famechon's head back with a jab

It doesn't help Pacquiao either that he would go right to Armstrong; there may be no more successful forward-moving fighter in history than "Homicide Hank," which means someone would have to back up here and it wouldn't be him. You could argue that Baby Arizmendi twice beat Armstrong at his own game, but his wins overArmstrong came by decision in Mexico, and Armstrong defeated him soundly in their third fight in California.

It's entirely possible that Pacquiao's power and speed (and he almost certainly would be faster than Armstrong) would give him the edge. But Armstrong was one of the game's greatest punchers and his in-your-chest style would negate Pacquiao's southpaw advantage. History suggests he'd just be too damn strong and too tough and too experienced. Pacquiao would make a great fight of this; he'd find Armstrong, and any time he's landing, he's in the fight. The bad part is if he's close enough to hit Armstrong, he's close enough to be hit too. In a war, Armstrong by late knockout.

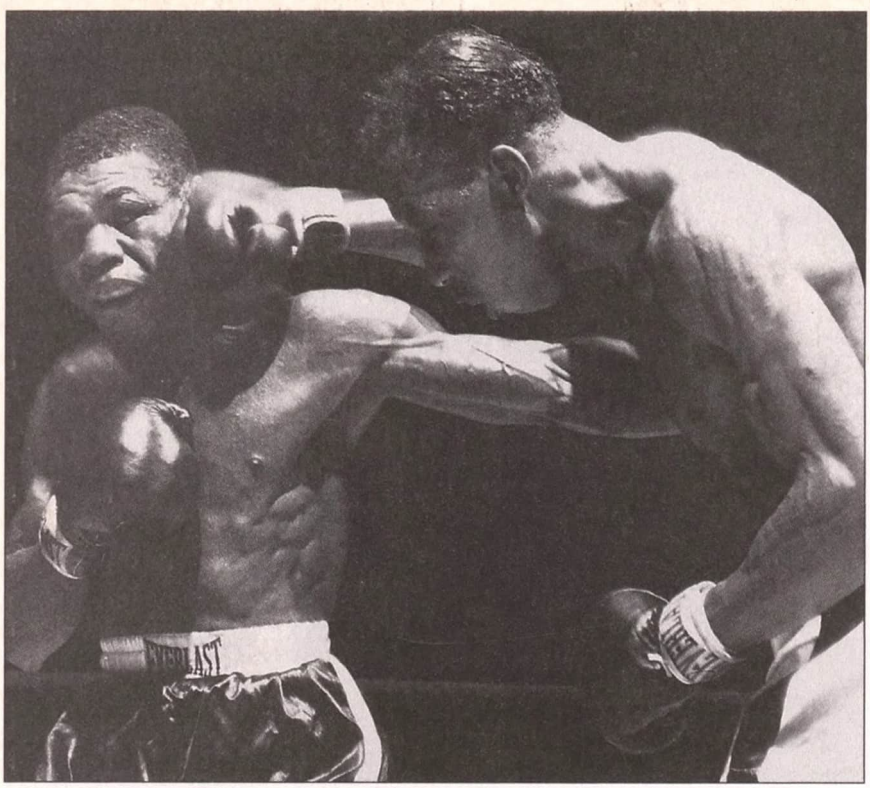
WILLIE PEP

230-11-1 (65)
World Featherweight Champion (November 20, 1942-October 29, 1948, February 11, 1949-September 8, 1950)

Any good fighting strategist will tell you the way to beat an opponent with an uncommonly good defense is to overwhelm him with offense. Even the geniuses can't slip or block everything, and the more you throw, the better chance you have at landing something substantive. Pacquiao throws so many punches that you figure that sooner or later he'd land something good on Pep. Here's the problem: The evidence tells us the only guy who could run over Pep was Sandy Saddler, and, in style, Pacquiao is no Saddler.

We know, other guys licked Pep too; he had 11 losses. But three of those were to Saddler. At least two more (to Lulu Perez and Tommy Collins) were probably fixes. Sammy Angott beat him early on, and the rest came during a long, sad comeback. Only Saddler—tall, strong, long-boned, rough and dirty, and too damned tough for Pep, who could be convinced to quit when things got too dicey—could handle Pep in his prime.

There is nothing in Pacquiao's history to suggest he could do what Saddler did three times out of four and that hundreds other fighters could not. He's not big and strong enough to manhandle and rough up Pep the way Saddler did. His only strategy would be to rush Pep as he did Marco Antonio Barrera, and try to overwhelm him with offense. You think Juan Manuel Marquez figured Pacquiao out after a few rounds? It would take Pep about 30 seconds. This one isn't close: Pep by comfortable decision.



Saddler hammers Teddy "Red Top" Davis with a right

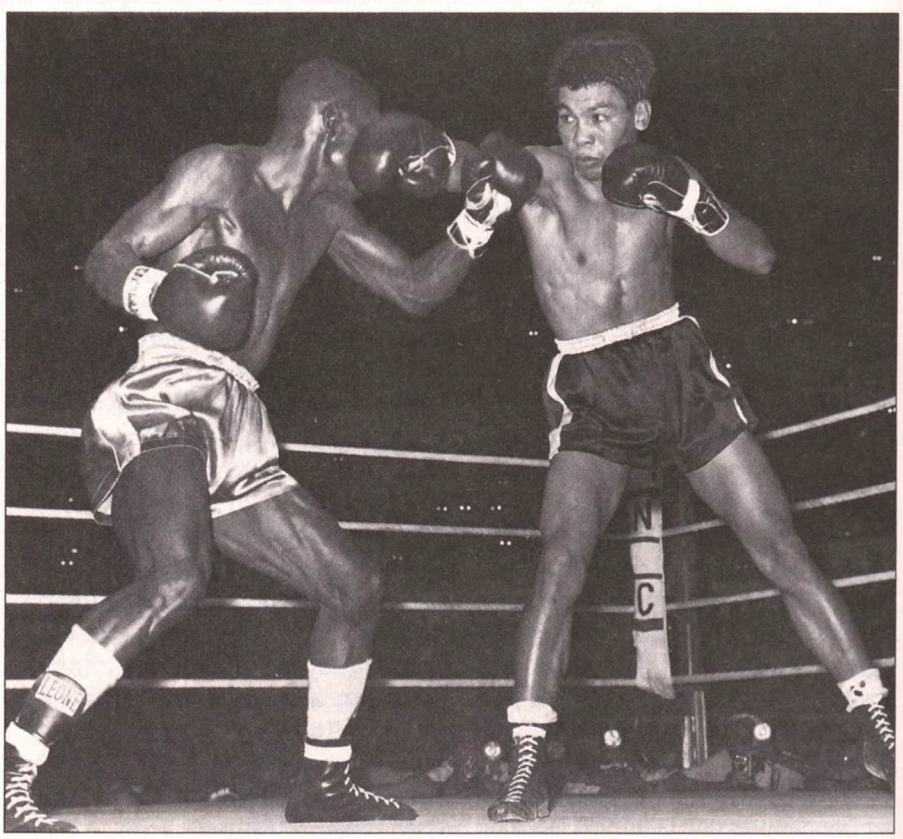
SANDY SADDLER

144-16-2 (103)
World Featherweight Champion
(October 29, 1948-February 11, 1949;
September 8, 1950-January 21, 1957)
World Junior Lightweight Champion
(December 6, 1949-January 21, 1957)

Saddler is best remembered for his mastery of Willie Pep, which, somehow both rightly and maddeningly, isn't enough to move him above Pep in most all-time featherweight ratings. Either way, Pep wasn't the only guy for whom Saddler was too much to handle. At just under 5'9", Saddler was inordinately big and strong for a featherweight (and junior lightweight) and dirty. He was a hard man and just too much fighter for most guys.

Some hold it against Saddler that Bobby McQuillar beat him, and Humberto Sierra and Chico Rosa too. And so did Del Flannagan and Lou Alter. Guys you never heard of. Here's some perspective: After losing to Alter, Saddler went on a 38-fight unbeaten streak with 25 knockouts. He put together similar streaks throughout his career: Win 14 in a row, lose to a pug. Win 17 more, lose again. It's okay. He went 3-1 against one of the all-time greats in Pep and it's hard to see him doing worse against Pacquiao.

If you were going to beat Saddler in a big fight, there was one imperative: Don't let him hit you. Pacquiao chases that imperative by attacking. And his blazing attacks overwhelm many guys, but they would not overwhelm Saddler, who was stopped, *get this*, once in 162 fights. If Pacquiao couldn't stop him or seriously hurt him, and almost no one did, and he couldn't outbox him when Pep couldn't, what's left? Getting stopped in the middle rounds. That's what.

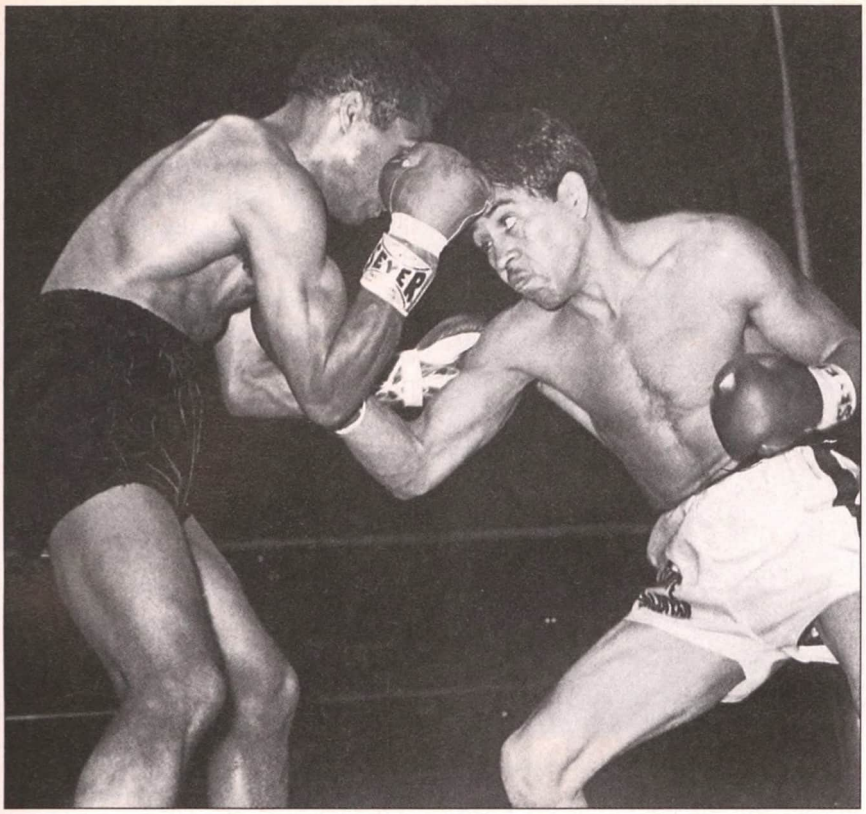


Elorde shoots a jab at Love Allotey

FLASH ELORDE

88-27-2 (33)
World Junior Lightweight Champion
(March 16, 1960-June 15, 1967)

That Elorde and Pacquiao are both Philippine icons is about where their similarities end. Elorde could hit, but he was no great knockout puncher. He dealt in speed and flurries and tenacity, where Pacquiao deals in all those and a wicked left cross and right hook too. That's not to say this is a walkover for today's Philippine idol. Elorde was a heck of a fighter and his wins over Harold Gomes, Joey Lopes, Sergio Caprari, and Lou Bizzarro—mostly in the



Saldivar (right) on the attack against Raul Rojas

Philippines in front of tens of thousands of riotous fans prove it. But when he stepped up against the elite guys, he faltered.

Sandy Saddler stopped Elorde on cuts, and the great Carlos Ortiz beat him twice. It's true that Elorde moved up in weight for those fights, and there's no shame in losing to the great Ortiz in any event. But a loss is a loss, and by the time he retired, Elorde ended up with more than anyone in this analysis, and not by a little.

Still, it's not an easy fight for Pacquiao. Elorde's long reach, snaking jab, and southpaw stance would make it hard for Pacquiao to get inside, and when on his way in, he'd risk getting tagged with a respectable right. And there always would be the chance that he, and not Elorde, would cut. But ultimately, Pacquiao' superior firepower would be the difference. We don't think he'd stop Elorde, whose backside didn't touch the canvas until he'd already logged 100 fights. But Pac-Man would get enough business done to take a comfortable decision.

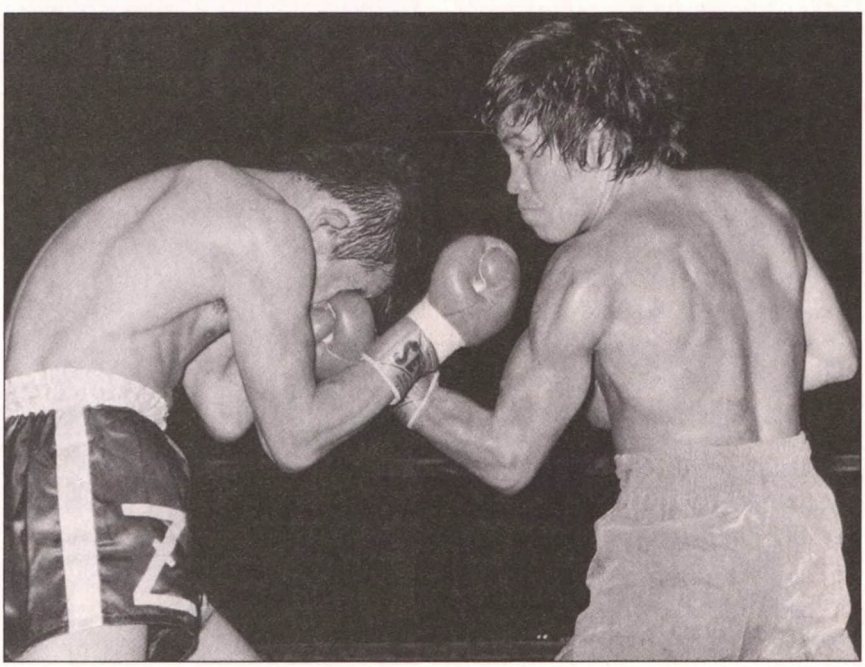
VICENTE SALDIVAR

38-3 (27)
World Featherweight Champion
(September 26, 1964-October 14, 1967; May 9, 1970-December 11, 1970)

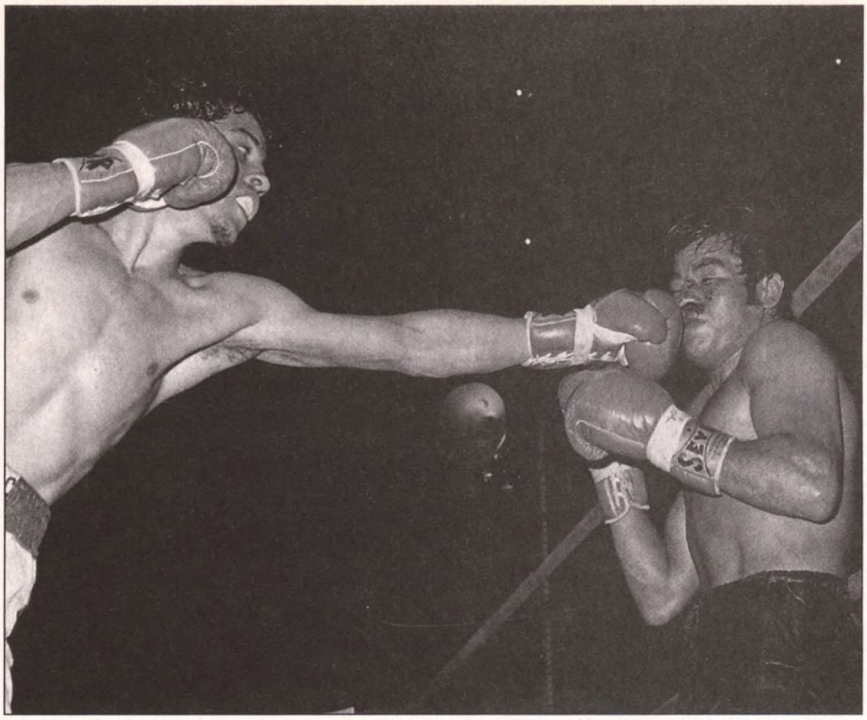
Saldivar comes closer than anyone in this analysis, except maybe Armstrong, to mirroring Pacquiao's style. Like Pacquiao, he was a pressure fighter who threw punches non-stop. Like Pacquiao, he was a southpaw. Like Pacquiao, he had tremendous physical strength and good power. And, like Pacquiao, he was idolized in his homeland. Saldivar is one of the most beloved Mexican champions ever, which is saying a lot.

Still, Pacquiao outshines Saldivar in a couple of key areas: hand speed and power. Saldivar liked to wear guys down with his strength, his conditioning, and his work rate, especially to the body (see his three struggles with Howard Winstone, who we don't see making it into the late rounds against Pacquiao). Once he reached the championship level, most of Saldivar's knockouts came late; in eight defenses he scored five knockouts, four of them in the seventh round or after.

Saldivar was steadier than Pacquiao is, probably technically better (you didn't see him rushing in off-balance all the time the way Pacquiao still does) and certainly physically stronger. But he wasn't quite as dynamic or explosive as Pacquiao can be. So what wins, Saldivar's steadiness or Pacquiao's speed and power? This is a tough call and if they fought 10 times they each might win five of them. But Saldivar was right there to be hit, and when that's the case, you have to go with the better hitter. Pacquiao in 10.



Olivares drives a left uppercut into Zensuke Utagawa's face



Chacon tags a bloody Chucho Castillo

RUBEN OLIVARES

88-13-3 (78)
World Bantamweight Champion (August 22, 1969-October 16, 1970; April 3, 1971-March 19, 1972)
WBA Featherweight Titleholder (July 9, 1974-November 23, 1974)
WBC Featherweight Titleholder (June 20, 1975-September 20, 1975)

Olivares' great appeal was that, like Harry Greb and a lot of other lesser-known fighters that came before and after him, he treated with considerable disdain the rudiments of the prizefighter's life. And he won anyway. That and his bomb of a left hook made him altogether irresistible. In a practical sense, it helped that he could box when he wanted to, but it went against his nature. He much preferred compiling enormous knockout streaks and indeed stopped 54 of his first 57 foes.

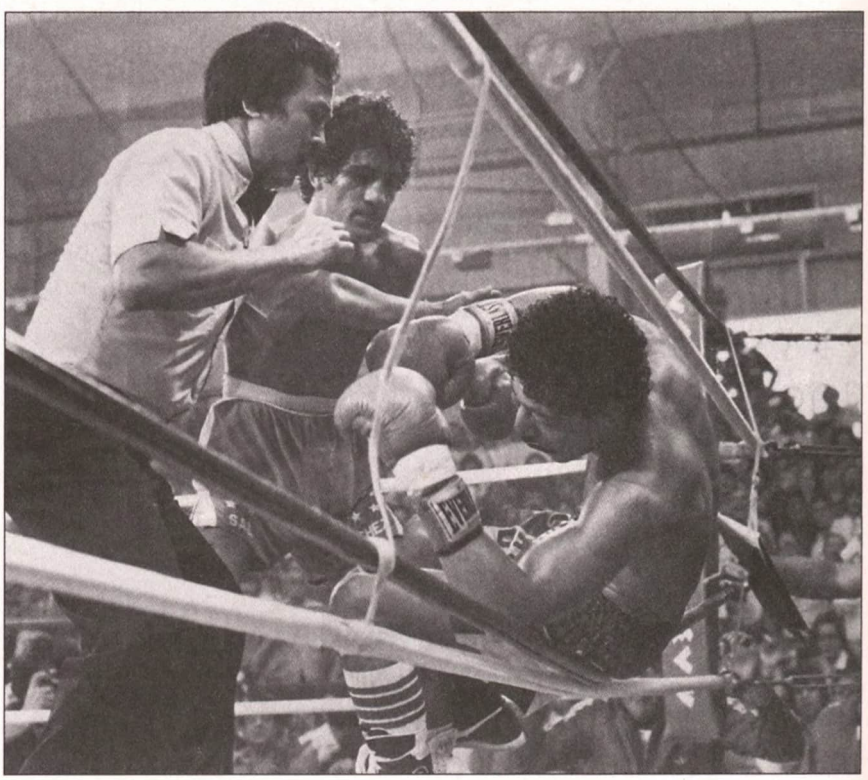
Most of the time Olivares forged ahead fearlessly, winging hooks as though hacking through a dense forest with a machete. On many occasions, he paid for his carelessness when the tender skin around his eyes made hard contact with something sharp and leaked crimson. Without question, his best weight was bantamweight, where he was a terror and very likely the hardest punching 118-pounder in history. He was less effective and far less consistent at featherweight, where his bombs didn't carry quite the same effect.

Against Pacquiao, Olivares would try to resist the temptation of getting into a slugfest early on; why bother if you can box a little. But eventually he'd succumb to his instincts and wage war on the inside. His hands were slower than Pacquiao's, but he hit harder, especially to the body. Both fighters would hit the canvas and spew copious amounts of blood, and the likeliest scenario, at featherweight, not bantamweight, is that Pacquiao's quicker hands and likely better conditioning would make the difference. Pacquiao, late, on cuts.

BOBBY CHACON

59-7-1 (47)
WBC Featherweight Titleholder (September 7, 1974-June 20, 1975)
WBC Junior Lightweight Titleholder (December 11, 1982-January 14, 1984)

Chacon was one of those wonderful West Coast punchers that made the lighter weights so much fun in the 1970s and early-'80s. He, Olivares, Chucho Castillo, Danny Lopez, and others so routinely brought out huge crowds to the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles and The Fabulous Forum in Inglewood that, regionally, they were like Hollywood movie stars. Chacon was charismatic



Sanchez sends Wilfredo Gomez partway through the ropes

and likable, could punch like hell, and also took a lot of shots and bled. What was there not to like?

By the time he got real television exposure in the early-'80s against Cornelius Boza Edwards, Ray Mancini, and Rafael "Bazooka" Limon (in THE RING's 1982 Fight of the Year), he was already past his prime and worn down by the tough fights and a hard-driving life. But the basics were the same: not a great defense, a lot of blood, a lot of heart, and a good punch. He could box well enough when he had to, as when he won the WBC title against Alfredo Marcano in '74, and fought well off the ropes, as against Edwards in '83. None of this would be much help to him against Pacquiao.

Chacon was too willing to stand and punch and too easy to hit and cut to do very well against Pacquiao. The possibility exists that he could catch Pacquiao and hurt him, but he couldn't match Pacquiao's speed and would be outpunched in most exchanges. And sooner or later (probably later) those eyebrows would bust open. Pacquiao by TKO some time after 10 rounds.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Nelson hooks James Leija en route to TKO victory

SALVADOR SANCHEZ

44-1-1 (32)
WBC Featherweight Titleholder
(February 2, 1980-August 12, 1982)

We've said this before: Sanchez was a wonderful featherweight, but his early death caused his stature to grow over the years to a degree disproportionate to his accomplishments. On the plus side, he twice completely dominated bomb-throwing Danny Lopez, one of the great TV fighters ever, and destroyed Wilfredo Gomez, perhaps the era's most gifted puncher. He was an unflappable, deceptively tough boxer with good legs and sound mechanics. While no great hitter, he was unerringly accurate and a superb counterpuncher.

Here's the other side: He was not as dominant as many recall. He barely survived a novice Azumah Nelson, whom he stopped in the 15th, and the same could be said of British challenger Pat Cowdell, over whom he won a split decision. (In his only other significant fight, Cowdell was stopped in a round by Nelson.) He could manage just a majority decision over novice Patrick Ford and the balance of his title challengers—a very young Juan LaPorte, Roberto Castanon, Jorge Garcia, and Ruben Castillo—were solid but unremarkable.

That said, it is very easy to make a case for Sanchez outpointing Pacquiao. He was at his best against stand-up punchers like Lopez, and that's not Pacquiao. But his strong jab, his smart, purposeful movement, and sturdy chin would keep him in it. Moreover, he wouldn't panic or succumb in the face of Pacquiao's attack. He was too cool for that. And he'd catch Pacquiao coming in with enough straight right hands and counters to probably cut him and to win a close, arguable decision.

AZUMAH NELSON

39-5-2 (28)
WBC Featherweight Titleholder
(December 8, 1984-February 29, 1988)
WBC Junior Lightweight Titleholder
(February 29, 1988-May 7, 1994;
December 1, 1996-March 22, 1997)

Styles mean everything in this business, and in this matchup they mean even more than that.

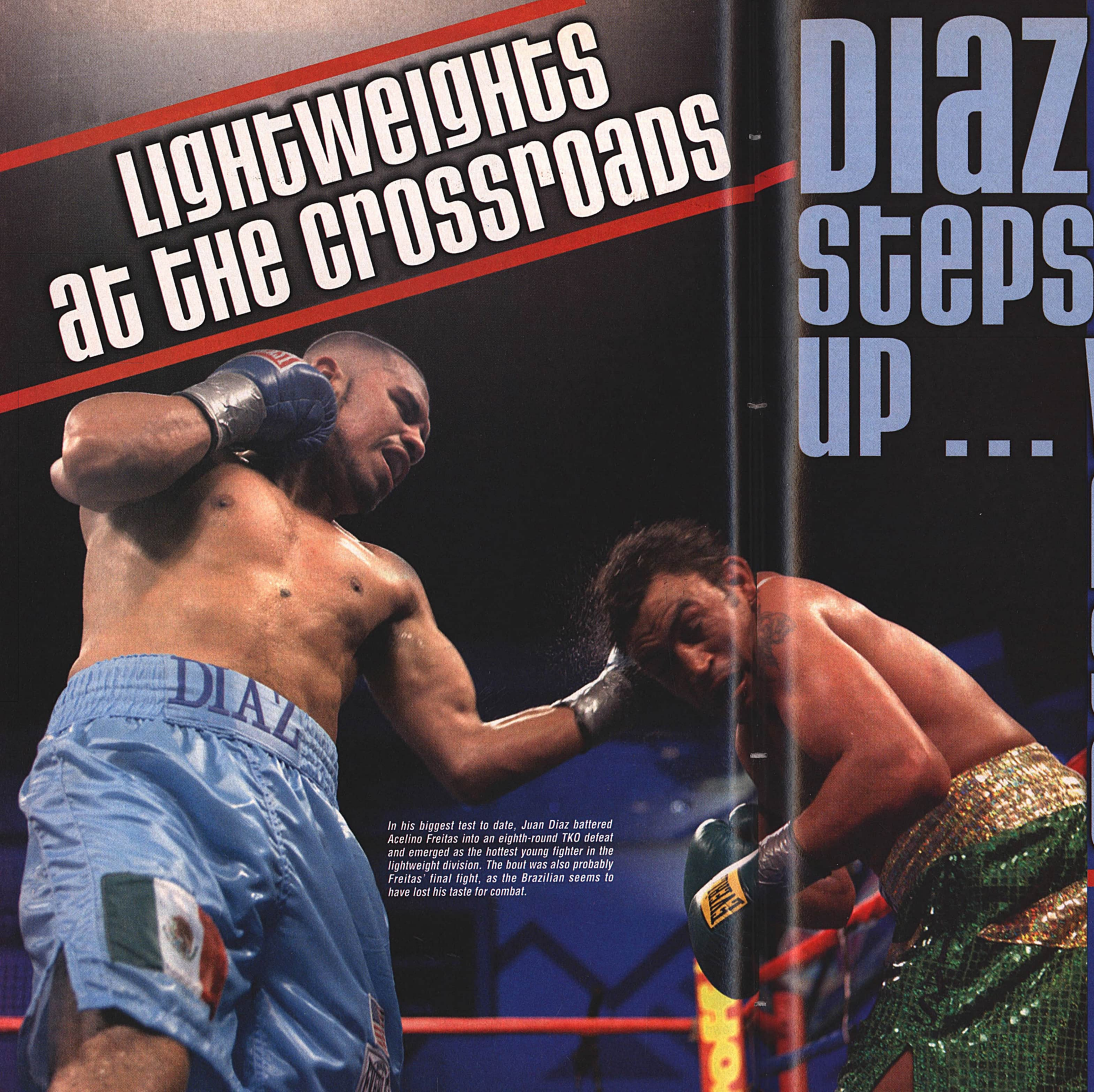
The fighters who scored wins over Nelson: Salvador Sanchez, Pernell Whitaker, Jesse James Leija, and Genaro Hernandez. None of those guys practiced a style even remotely similar to Pacquiao's. They all were boxers who were able to take advantage of Nelson's average foot speed, and, in some cases, his age. Nelson just did not lose to guys that came to him, as Pacquiao certainly would. End of story.

We'll make an argument for the hell of it: Nelson barely got by Marcos Villasana and Mario Martinez in their first fights. Same thing with Gabe Ruelas. And his draw against Jeff Fenech in their first meeting was widely and correctly considered a gift. None of the guys were movers. But in subsequent rematches, Nelson stopped Ruelas (who admittedly was not the same fighter anymore), all but shut out Villasana, stopped Martinez in 12, and took out Fenech in eight. The moral of the story: If you caught Nelson when he was having an off-night or was under-trained, you might get some business done. But he righted things in the rematch.

Pacquiao's style is made for Nelson. He'd come barreling in winging right hooks and straight left hands and "The Professor" would very calmly pick him apart on the way in. If he didn't stop him late, he'd win a comfortable decision. And if he didn't do it then, he certainly would in the rematch. ■

Lightweights at the crossroads

Diaz steps up ... will Freitas step out?



In his biggest test to date, Juan Diaz battered Acelino Freitas into an eighth-round TKO defeat and emerged as the hottest young fighter in the lightweight division. The bout was also probably Freitas' final fight, as the Brazilian seems to have lost his taste for combat.

By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

A well-rested but decidedly downbeat Acelino Freitas wandered through the Foxwoods Resort Casino the morning after losing his lightweight alphabet belt to Juan Diaz. A small entourage was with him, young men wearing the yellow, green, and blue of Brazil. They, too, were decidedly

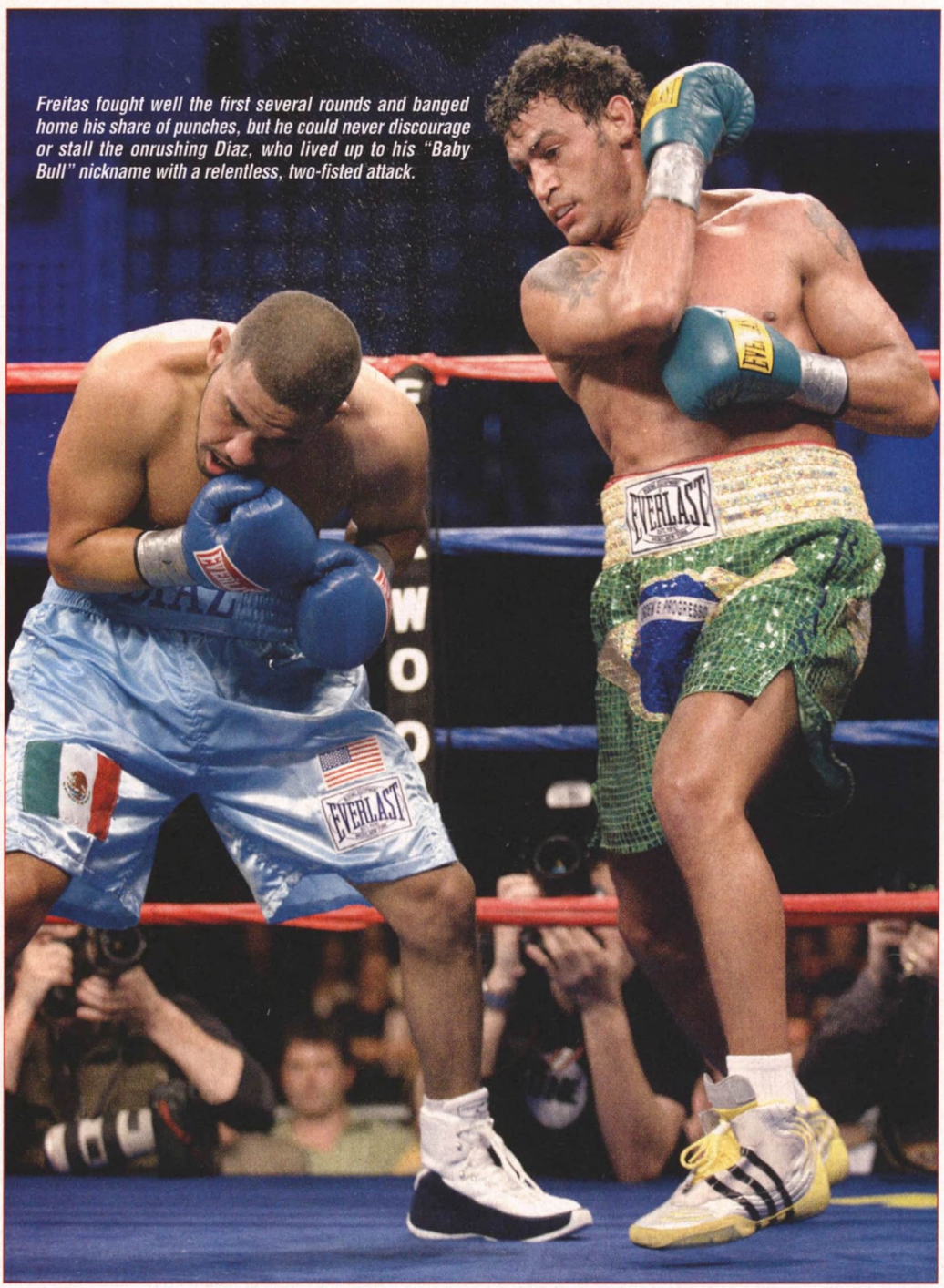
downbeat, carefully making their way through the crowd of senior citizens, tanning salon hags, and loud-shirted rubbernecks. Foxwoods is in the middle of a yearlong 15th anniversary celebration, and even on a Sunday morning, the place was full. Freitas, alarmingly small in person, moved about anonymously, putting us in mind of the title character in Antoine De Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*; he had wandered far but never found the love that he already had at home.

That Freitas was never quite embraced by the American fight mob is not a surprise. He had the kind of punch that sells tickets, but we were stonewalled by something in his personality; he wept all the time; he kept retiring and coming back; he went from being a scary knockout artist to a defensive bore. Against Jorge Barrios in 2004, he showed valor for the ages, rising from knockdowns to score a Hail Mary knockout; against Diego Corrales he quit. His reasons for surrendering to Corrales were murky.

"Someday it will all come out," said his loyal promoter, Art Pelullo. "He told me he couldn't see; his vision was so blurry he couldn't continue."

Freitas also appeared to quit against Diaz, although his trainer, Oscar Suarez, took responsibility for stopping the bout, saying, "You can't sit by and let a young man get punished like that."

Suarez is a warm human being, and he provides a noble backdrop for Freitas' flaky character. "We're a little sad," Suarez told THE RING the morning after Diaz had ruined Freitas' dream of a fifth title belt. The feeling among Team "Popo" was one of resignation and acceptance. You win some, you lose some. Some of us thought, even during the eighth round when Freitas wilted under Diaz' attack, that he might summon up one last, cold-blooded punch, the way he had against Barrios. "That's what we were hoping," said Suarez. "But obviously, it wasn't going to happen. The little bull is good, man. He represents."



Freitas fought well the first several rounds and banged home his share of punches, but he could never discourage or stall the onrushing Diaz, who lived up to his "Baby Bull" nickname with a relentless, two-fisted attack.

The little bull, of course, is Diaz, "The Baby Bull." With two other lightweights also named Diaz (IBF titlist Julio, and contender David), it's important that Juan and his promoter, Don King, market the Baby Bull label for all it's worth. Judging by the amount of Baby Bull T-shirts and flyers at Foxwoods, and the way King kept shouting, "THE BAAAAABY BULL," they may have already started.

Diaz won the WBA lightweight belt three years ago at age 20 by outpointing Lakva Sim. He'd fought six times since then, but the Diaz braintrust kept him under the radar. He needed more seasoning. Freitas was a step up in

competition for Diaz, and some thought Diaz was a perfect foil: He wasn't a destroyer like Corrales, and he wasn't a slickster like Zahir Raheem, whom Freitas narrowly decisioned last year. Indeed, for the first three rounds of the Foxwoods bout, it looked like Freitas was in control of Diaz. He boxed smartly, moved about the ring, and caught the incoming Diaz with crispy countershots. Diaz snorted and romped like an eager little bull, but Freitas was fighting a prettier fight.

Diaz displayed a far better left jab than in past fights, frequently snapping back Freitas' head. Adding the jab will make Diaz' already potent offense even better, which is certainly bad news for the rest of the 135-pound division.

Still, even as Freitas was outclassing him, Diaz was succeeding in small ways. In the first round, he landed a strong right to Freitas' jaw, and late in the second, he trapped Popo on the ropes and landed a frenzy of blows to the body. Diaz continued chipping away in the third and fourth, and by the fifth he was pouring hell on Freitas. At one point, Diaz' non-stop pressure nearly knocked the Brazilian star through the ropes. Behind the press row a band of teenage girls squealed like a chorus of infants, "Popo! Popo!" (pronounced "Pawpaw"), but Freitas spent the sixth looking tired and concerned, as if he'd realized, once again, that fighting for money is a terrible way to earn a living. Freitas did enough to seem competitive, but he was being crowded by a younger, tireless fighter, and he didn't like it.

Things started slowly in the seventh, when both fighters appeared spent, but when Freitas came off the ropes and clipped Diaz with a surprise left uppercut, the Baby Bull went berserk. He battered Freitas across the ring, swatting him with hooks to the face, clubbing him to the body and arms. Freitas would probe weakly with his jab, only to be smeared again and again by Diaz' left hook.

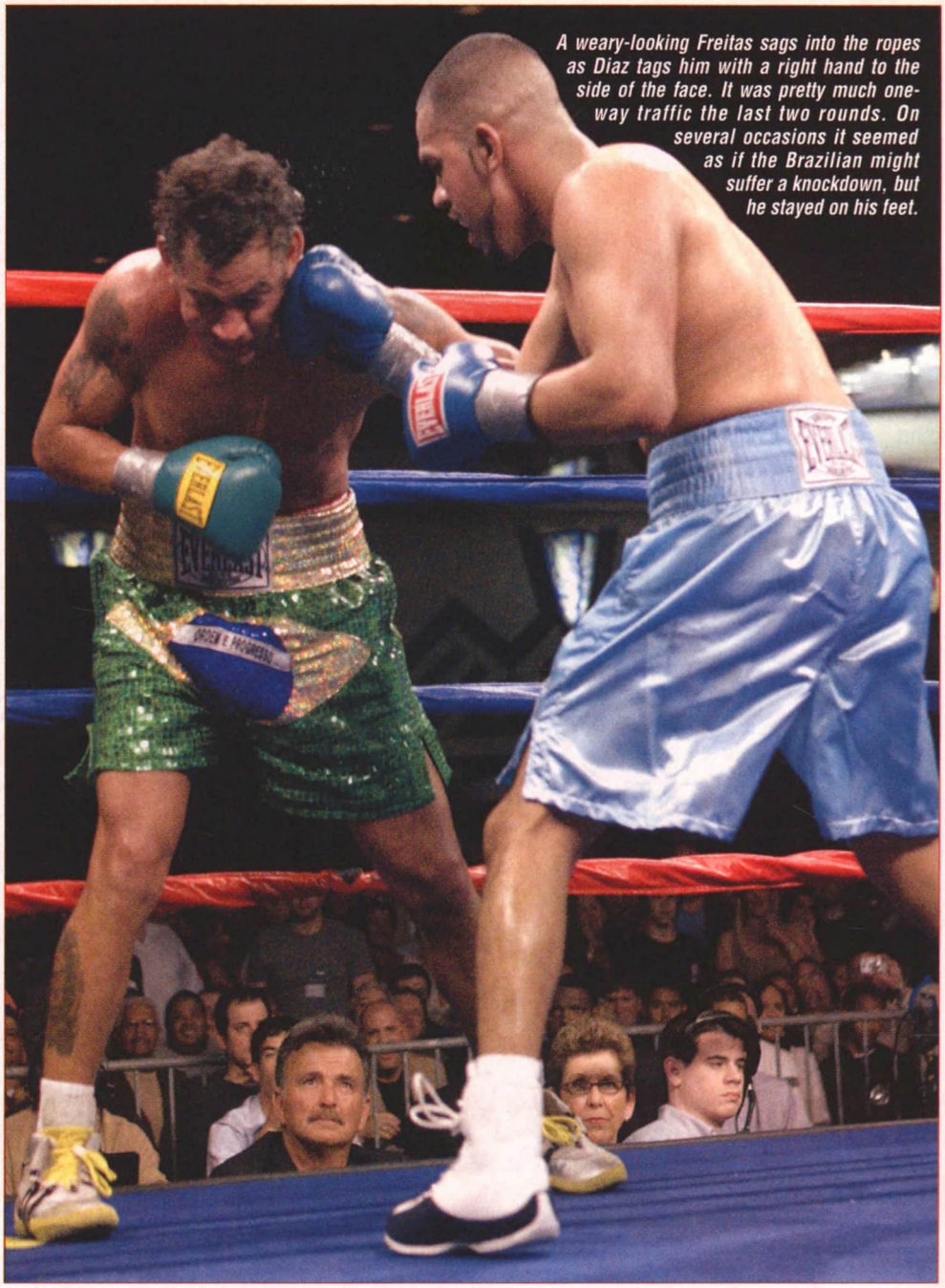
The eighth was more of the same. Twice Freitas sagged as if he were about to go down. When Freitas didn't answer the ninth bell, Diaz leaped onto the corner ropes and howled with happiness, saluting in the direction of where his parents were sitting, his mother in tears. Inexplicably, Freitas' corner lifted their man onto their shoulders and carried him around the ring. He should've told them, "I just had my ass handed to me, so don't be parading me around." But Freitas is accustomed to such treatment; he even thumped his chest as if to say he had a ton of heart somewhere in there. Or maybe he was saying he *used* to have some heart. It's hard to tell with Freitas.

The "Once And For Brawl" show was a sellout—this was Foxwoods' 100th boxing event—but aside from the main bout, it was a snoozer. The 3,150 in attendance didn't come alive until Don King strolled through the Fox Arena looking like a fat and sassy pontiff, his hair still piled as high as a bishop's miter.

Even the drum-banging crowd that usually comes out for Freitas' fights seemed subdued. If not for a smattering of bejeweled *mulheres bonitas* sitting near the ring, you wouldn't have known Popo was in the house at all. It was as if the De La Hoya-Mayweather fight, scheduled for the following week in Las Vegas, had sucked the air out of the room. Diaz-Freitas was treated as an

appetizer, which was unfortunate because it turned out to be a dramatic fight that heralded the arrival of a new lightweight star. King told the postfight gathering, in an epic monologue that alluded to the Bible, Sam Houston, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Dorothy from *The Wizard Of Oz*, that Juan Diaz would be the savior of boxing.

Diaz, 32-0 (16), isn't the sport's savior, but he could be a force in the lightweight division. He's a clean living, well-mannered young man who fights like a dynamo. After whipping Freitas, there was some spite in his voice when he recalled the naysayers who'd mocked his runty physique. Then he joked that his "love handles" provide him with energy during the late rounds of a fight. He said he was using his left jab more, but he also praised his "inner Mexican" that likes to brawl. Indeed, he did some headbutting and roughing against Freitas, which was enjoyable since Diaz was once considered too sensitive for this business. Diaz also maintained that fighting was just a hobby, and that he was still focused on his pre-law studies at the University of Houston.



A weary-looking Freitas sags into the ropes as Diaz tags him with a right hand to the side of the face. It was pretty much one-way traffic the last two rounds. On several occasions it seemed as if the Brazilian might suffer a knockdown, but he stayed on his feet.

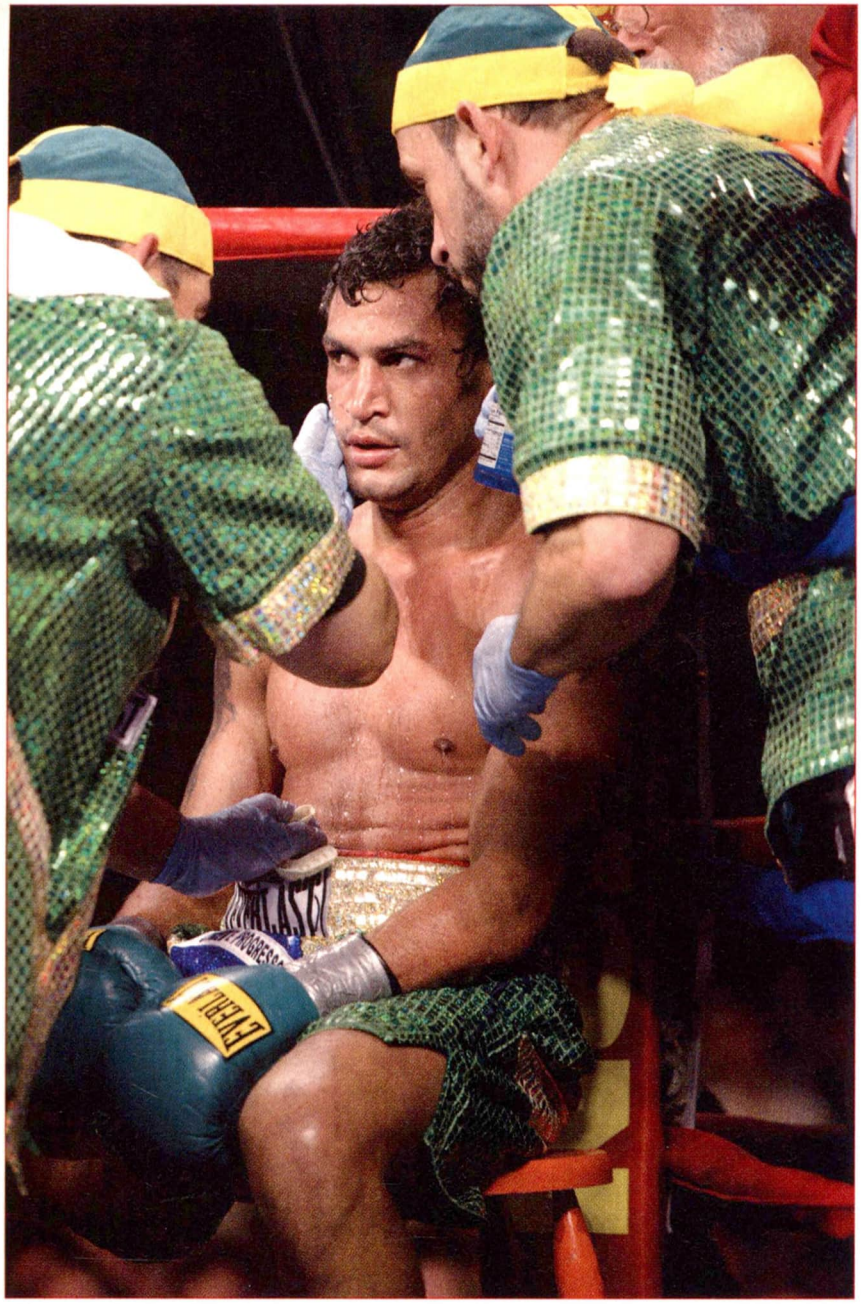
"He'll be the mayor of Houston by the time he's 30," said Diaz' manager and mentor, Willie Savannah, who may have been the happiest man in the room.

Lurking at ringside was a short, tanned man wearing a *Miami Vice* white blazer and aqua blue slacks. He looked no different than any other Foxwoods tourist, but he turned out to be Joel Casamayor, the Cuban veteran who is recognized by THE RING as the world champion at 135. He was lobbying for a match with Diaz the old-fashioned way, by showing up at the fight and making his presence felt. Within 48 hours he'd released a statement to the Internet.

"Diaz stepped up and fought a great fight, taking the first step in unifying the title. Now he needs to complete the mission by going mano-a-mano with me to determine the true lightweight champion. My belt from THE RING magazine—the only belt that you can't lose outside the ring to politics, and can only win inside the ropes—against Juan's WBA and WBO straps. I am the true linear champion."

Casamayor, being an older fighter, will have trouble with Diaz' perpetual motion, but his craftiness would give Diaz another good test. Previously, Diaz had been like a soft tornado whipping through a small Texas town but not doing a speck of damage; against Freitas, he showed that the winds are getting harsher. A pressure fighter without a knockout punch can't have a lengthy career, but Diaz will be enormous fun for as long as he lasts. He even called out Manny Pacquiao as his dream opponent. We should be so lucky.

As for Freitas, 38-2 (32), we've probably seen the last of him. It will be difficult to sell another of his fights in this country. Even his loyal fans must be tired of journeying to Mashantucket to watch him quit. We don't know why he quits during fights, or goes in and out of retirement. There'd been rumors



Freitas quit on his stool at the conclusion of the eighth round. Although trainer Oscar Suarez told the media that he stopped the fight to save his man further punishment, TV replays clearly show Freitas telling his corner he couldn't continue.

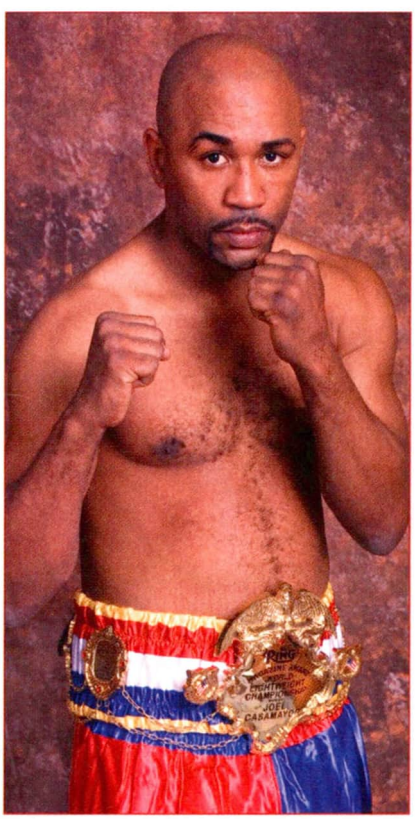
coming out of his camp for years that a nose injury had made it difficult to breathe, and that his defensive style had come from trying to protect his nose. Maybe the breathing problem causes him to gas out during intense fights. Or maybe too much was taken out of him by his heroic turn against Barrios. Some fighters, like artists, have only one masterpiece in them, and the Barrios fight may have been it for Freitas. At 31, he's not done physically, but he may be done mentally.

After the bout, as Suarez and Pelullo choked back their emotion, Freitas seemed calm for a change. It had been a hell of a career, after all, even if he didn't turn out to be an all-time great. He went from living in a tin shack to being treated like a Raja. He explained in Portuguese that he will now help young fighters in Brazil, and maybe that's where he belongs. Before he stepped down from the podium to let Diaz talk, he wanted to say one last thing, although a din from outside made it difficult to hear him. A chant of "Mehico! Mehico!" was rifling through the casino. But Freitas kept going; he'd been shut down in the ring, but he wouldn't be shut down here, in what was likely his farewell speech to America.

"I have a baby son who is almost Diaz' age," he said. "I will start getting him ready." It was the best line of the night. Then he winked and grinned, showing the movie star teeth that Pelullo thought would help make him a star.

The next morning, Freitas helped his team load their van in front of the casino. Hugs were exchanged all around. Then he boarded a stretch limousine, disappearing behind its black tinted windows. The door opened a bit, revealing Freitas' wife, as well as a nanny cradling a baby, but Popo was gone, absorbed into the deep, shadowy confines of luxury. The vehicle rolled out like an ocean liner, past a field of yellow Forsythias, green ferns, and a blue Connecticut sky—the colors of Brazil. Then it was gone too. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.



World lightweight champion Joel Casamayor attended the Diaz-Freitas fight to challenge the winner. Afterward, he called out Diaz and soon launched a publicity campaign intended to lure the Baby Bull into the ring with him.

SYMMETRY AFTER TRILOGY

Gatti-Ward: Together Again

By Joe Santoliquito

We've grown so used to seeing them together, whether it was in the ring, practically killing each other during their incredible trilogy, or lying next to one another in adjacent hospital beds of the emergency ward. For a few years, Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward was boxing's feel-good story, two brave everymen the sport loved to embrace. Rivals who respected one another, rivals who turned into caring friends. And now the relationship between Ward and Gatti is about to reach yet another level: that of trainer and fighter.

When Gatti prepares for what is supposed to be his farewell fight, on July 19 at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, against *Contender I* semifinalist Alfonso Gomez, it will be Ward standing

Former foe Ward tapes Gatti's gloves prior to a Florida training session for Gatti's upcoming bout with Alfonso Gomez. After breaking up with Buddy McGirt, who trained him for his trilogy with Ward, Gatti took the unusual step of hiring his old nemesis to train him for what could be his farewell fight.

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

over him in the corner, directing his former adversary.

"I am really excited about this; it's another opportunity for Arturo to go out on top, and I have a chance to help him do that," said Ward in his thick Massachusetts accent. "I'll give the same effort in training that I gave in the ring, and Arturo knows that."

Gatti should.

"Can you imagine how motivated I'll be running with Micky in the mornings?" Gatti asked. "This is a whole new look for me, working with Micky. I'm back to proving people wrong about me again. I think Micky can help change that aspect."

Ward and Gatti engaged in one of the best boxing trilogies—the best sports trilogy, for that matter—this century. From May 18, 2002, to June 7, 2003, Gatti and Ward beat the living hell out of each other, with Ward taking the first fight and Gatti the next two. The first and third encounters were selected as THE RING's Fight of the Year.

What made the three-fight series even more compelling was the tight friendship the two formed—true brothers in arms. After retiring following his third fight with Gatti, Ward would sometimes accompany his former foe during his ring walk.

"The two of them working together certainly increases the marketability of the Gomez fight," said Kathy Duva, CEO of Main Events, Gatti's promoter. "It caught me by surprise when I first heard, but I like the idea. It makes an interesting storyline. They fought each other three times and built a great rivalry. Their names will always be linked together. It would be like Joe Frazier training Muhammad Ali, or Willie Pep working with Sandy Saddler."

The idea started as a whim. Nothing more. Ward and Mark De Vincentis were finishing the last nine miles of the Boston Marathon in mid-April, chugging along trying to talk between breaths. De Vincentis, a mutual friend of Ward and Pat Lynch's, Gatti's long-time manager, leaned over and suggested it might be a good idea for Ward to train Gatti.

Ward kept running, pondering the thought with each step ... *hmm ... wouldn't that be interesting, to be paired with Gatti once again?*

"That's how it started," Lynch said. "We knew Micky had been training some fighters, and when we heard it was suggested Micky might be interested in training Arturo, I jumped right on it. But Micky isn't someone who's going to come straight out and ask Arturo. Mark had to come to us to drop the hint."

When Gatti came to Lynch's Secaucus, New Jersey, office in April, Lynch thought it was a good time to see what

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Gatti is delighted to be working with Ward and believes that together they can show the world that he still has plenty of fight left in him. Ward thinks that his ex-rival can perform a lot better than he did in his most recent fight, a kayo loss to Carlos Baldomir.

Gatti thought of the idea. He didn't have to wait long for a reaction.

"Arturo got Micky right on the phone, and they decided right there," Lynch recalled. "Arturo said he would love to have Micky train him."

This new connection comes in the wake of the severed relationship between Gatti and his former trainer, Buddy McGirt. The two had forged a symbiotic bond that flourished. McGirt reacquainted Gatti with his dormant boxing skills, prolonging his career and making millions more in the process. Moreover, the constant attention Gatti received with each fight shed new light on McGirt, helping to make him one of the most sought-after trainers in the world.

McGirt and Gatti were together for a 10-fight stretch, spanning 4½ years, from January 26, 2002, when Gatti took apart the hard-punching Terron Millett in Madison Square Garden, to July 22, 2006, when Carlos Baldomir devoured Gatti in nine rounds to retain the world welterweight championship.

Ward was ringside in Atlantic City when Baldomir chewed up Gatti. The beating was so one-sided, Gatti, 40-8 (31), strongly suggested afterward he would retire. He certainly did not look like a world-class fighter that night. In fact, he looked so terribly vulnerable that the idea of stepping into the ring with another top-10 welterweight seemed to border on lunacy.

"Arturo was ready for Baldomir, I know that, because Buddy works all of his fighters hard and gets them prepared, believe me, I should know," said Ward, who led Gatti into the ring before the Baldomir fight. "I chalked up Arturo's performance as just one of those nights. Arturo didn't look right, he didn't look like the same Arturo I knew. I think Arturo is a lot better than how he fought that night.

"If I were in Buddy's shoes, I would have tried to give Arturo the best advice I could. Everyone has a different way how to fight certain guys. I would have had Arturo look at some film and figure what we would do from there. I think this is good that I step in. Sometimes people do need a change, and hopefully we can prolong his career a little longer."

McGirt declined to comment on what exactly went down between Gatti and him, only to say, "I wish Arturo the best,

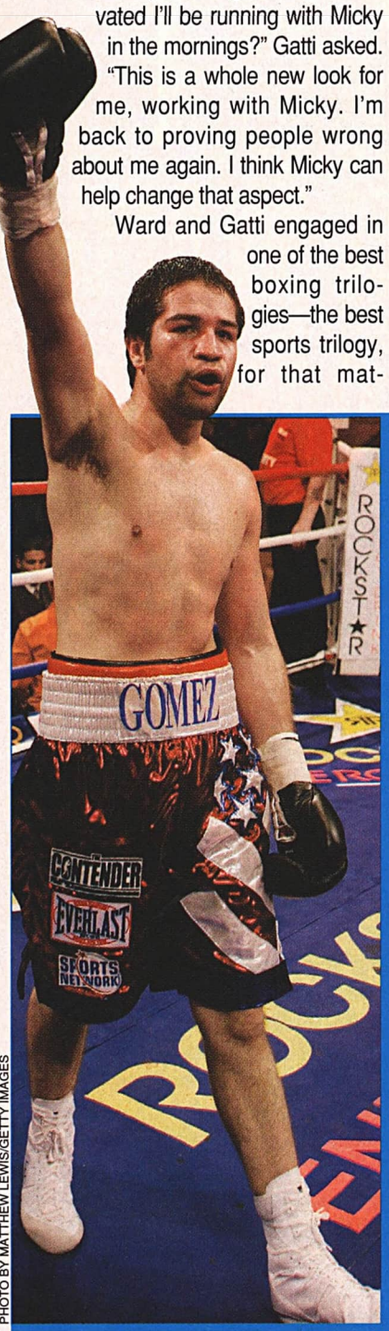


PHOTO BY MATTHEW LEWIS/GETTY IMAGES

Gomez intends to spoil Gatti's comeback

Maybe This *Contender* Is For Real

Alfonso Gomez was the rugged cherub who boldly challenged the perceived best fighter early in the first season of *The Contender*. He shocked everyone by beating Peter Manfredo to make history of sorts, becoming the winner of the first fight on the popular TV reality show. By the end of the first season, Gomez' grit and underdog determination had made him a fan favorite.

Gomez will carry some of that celebrity into the ring when he faces the even larger task of getting by the creaky Arturo "Thunder" Gatti. Gomez, 16-3-2 (7), will be confronted with a desperate fighter trying to prove he's not washed-up. Gomez will also carry with him the burden of whether or not any of the fighters from *The Contender* are indeed contender-worthy.

In April, Manfredo's performance against super middleweight world champion Joe Calzaghe, in Cardiff, Wales, was embarrassing. Manfredo succumbed in the third round, and then complained that referee Terry O'Connor prematurely called off the fight. And while the ref probably did make his move too soon, Manfredo did next to nothing during his time in the ring with Calzaghe.

Sergio Mora, *Contender I* champion, has been a disappointment. In his second fight against Manfredo, in October 2005, he received what could be viewed as a gift decision. Since then, he's beaten ordinary Eric Regan and Archak TerMeliksetian. More significantly, "The Latin Snake" also backed out of a proposed fight with middleweight world champion Jermain Taylor, over what sounded like a bogus reason concerning the prominence of the fight site (Memphis, Tennessee, which happens to be the same city that hosted Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson).

Now, Gomez carries *The Contender* mantle. He has not fought anyone of Gatti's caliber before, but is coming off of an impressive seventh-round knockout of Martin Concepcion in March, and is 4-0-1 in his last five fights, the draw coming against Jesse Feliciano in May 2006.

Gomez was handpicked as Gatti's opponent. He's well known because of his stint on *The Contender*, and it helps that he's an action fighter without much of a punch. Still, he's nine years younger than the 35-year-old Gatti and much fresher, so another upset like the one he sprang against Manfredo isn't out of the question.

Gomez won the hearts of *Contender* viewers with his endearing personality and gutsy fighting style, and while both helped earn him the fight, it is the latter that figures to give Gatti problems.

—J.S.

and I'm grateful for the chance he gave me." Ward wouldn't speculate as to whether or not Gatti's rift with McGirt had anything to do with his sub-par performance against Baldomir. Even Lynch was baffled.

"I really don't know what happened between Arturo and Buddy; Arturo never really shared that with me," Lynch said. "That was a personal issue that I still don't know what it was all about. It happened after the Baldomir fight, and we immediately started talking about new trainers."

Hall of Famer Pernell Whitaker's name had come up. Gatti has a good relationship with Whitaker, if anyone can have a good relationship with the enigmatic former star. Al Certo was also considered.

Ward, however, wasn't mentioned—not until April, with the fight quickly approaching. The fact that he's never trained a fighter of Gatti's caliber hasn't dampened anybody's enthusiasm.

"Micky was in the trenches against Arturo, so he knows Arturo and we know Micky was a good fighter," Lynch said. "There's absolute trust here. If there weren't, we wouldn't have agreed to work with Micky. No one realized how good a trainer Buddy was until Arturo gave him the chance. Who knows what can happen here? I mean, who even thought you'd have two guys in the ring going at each other the way they did and wind up being best friends, with one training the other?"

Typical give-and-take action from the third and final Gatti-Ward encounter, which Gatti captured via 10-round decision to take the three-bout series, 2-1. The savage trilogy took a lot out of both men, but also earned them millions of dollars.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

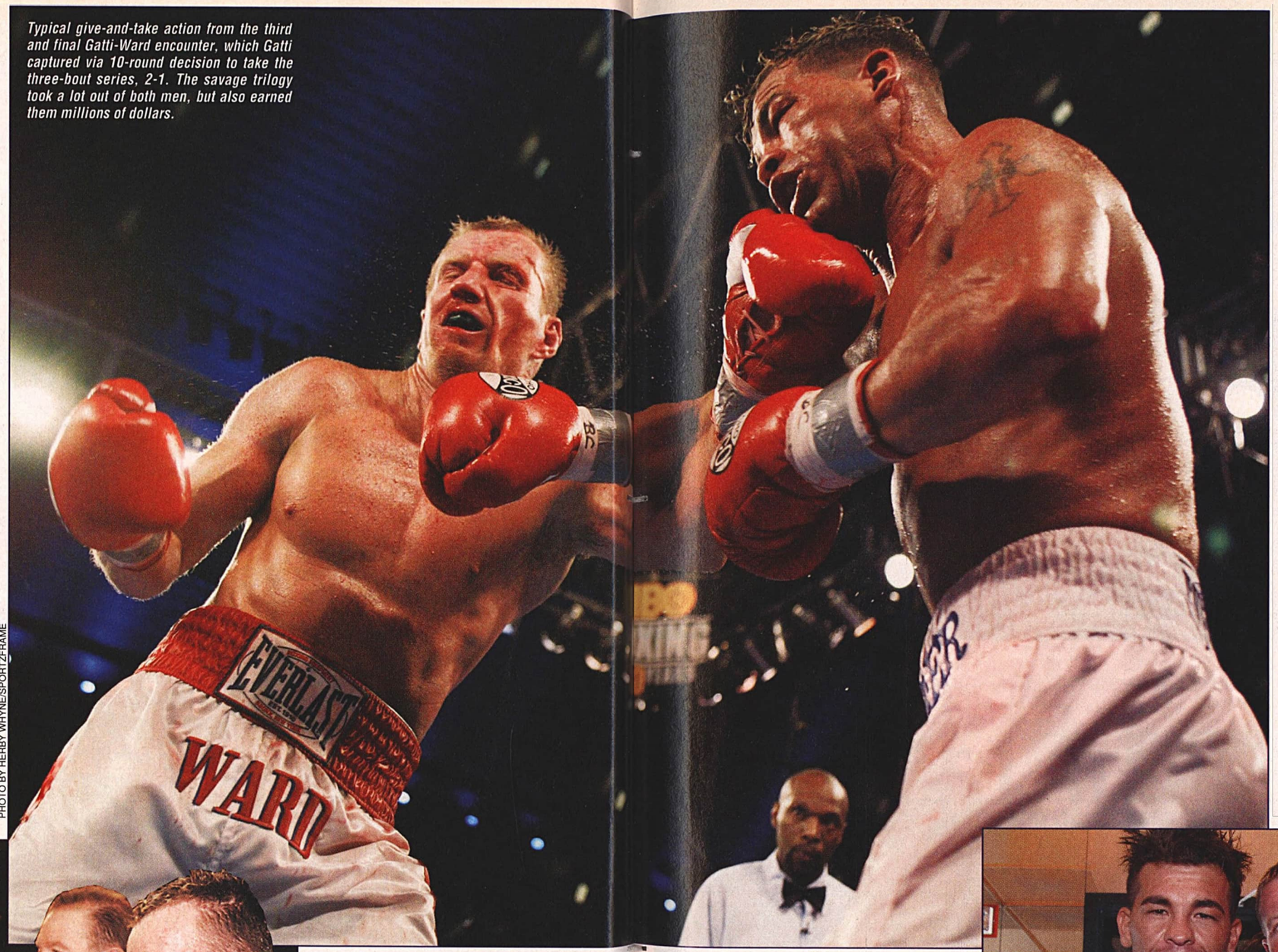


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Gatti and Ward share a laugh at the conclusion of their second fight. Despite the brutal nature of their bouts, the two men formed a strong bond of respect and admiration that led to friendship and now a business partnership.

The Gatti-Ward coupling may be a one-and-done deal. Then again, it may not. The big question that lurks behind this giddy pairing is simple: If Gatti looks good, will he continue fighting? Remember, this was originally being billed as Gatti's *farewell fight*. If he demolishes Gomez, will he still take a final bow at center ring and walk off to continue the rest of his life?

Nothing is certain, said Duva, who noted that the only reason this match with Gomez was billed as a farewell fight is because it's the last fight on Gatti's current HBO contract. In her opinion, Gatti is still a viable commodity.

Knowing Gatti, he may have to be pulled out of the ring by his ankles, screaming, before he calls it quits. Ward knew enough to get out after the third fight with Gatti. He knew his body couldn't withstand the pounding of another arduous training camp.

Can Gatti?

"That's a question that Arturo is going to have to answer," Ward said. "Even if he wins and doesn't want to continue, he won't continue. We'll see how he feels. As much as a lot of people want him to walk away, the decision is ultimately his. All I can do is give advice. I told Arturo after the Baldomir fight that if he wanted to put on his gloves one last time, I would support him.

"What kills are the training camps, putting your body through six weeks of hell. It's not the fight itself, it's the preparation for the fight."

Ward will be looking for signs. He'll watch carefully to see if his friend's timing is off or if there is a lack of head movement. "I'll definitely speak up to Arturo if I think he's in any kind of danger, and that comes from caring about the guy. I won't see him get hurt. But I really think Arturo has something left, more than he showed against Baldomir. I wouldn't be leaving my home and work to commit myself to this if I didn't believe in him."

In early-May, the two started training in Pompano, Florida, at the aptly named Rambo Boxing gym. Ward admitted that Gatti, a 35-year-old veteran of 48 fights, isn't going to deviate much from the way he fought in the past.

"At this point, there isn't really much you can teach Arturo, but if I can motivate him, work on a good game plan, and keep him mentally strong, I'll know I did my job," Ward said. "The one thing I won't do is spar with him. I've already been hit enough by Arturo." ■

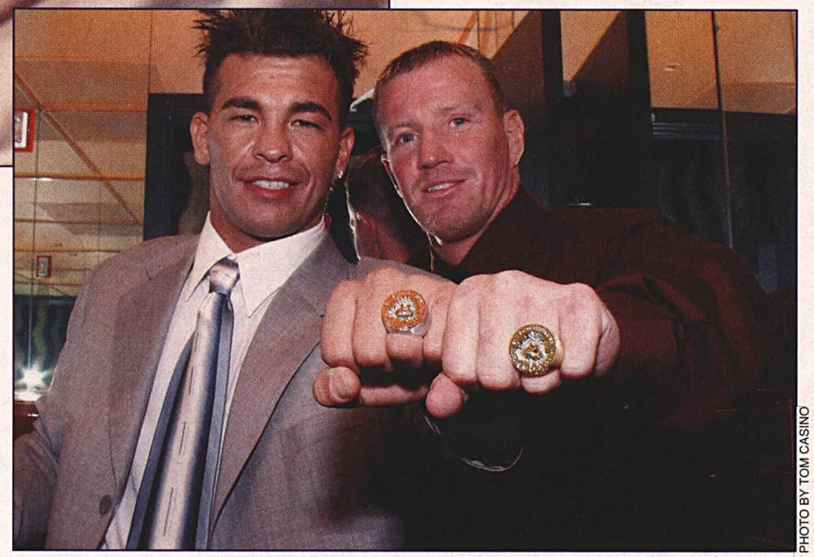


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

After Ward hung up his gloves following his third fight with Gatti, he had a retirement party at the Mohegan Sun Casino, the venue for their first fight. As a special treat, Gatti had rings made for both of them and their teams to commemorate the three wars they'd waged.

BITE MARKS

PHOTOS BY JED JACOBSOHN GETTY IMAGES

Referee Mills Lane calls time out as Holyfield recoils in pain (below) after Tyson chewed off a piece of his ear (bottom left). Following his disqualification, Tyson tried to attack Hoyfield again and had to be restrained by police and security guards. Overall, it was one of the most bizarre episodes in boxing's long and eventful history.

10 YEARS LATER, DOES HOLYFIELD-TYSON II STILL HAVE OUR EAR?

By Eric Raskin

It was early-20th-century *New York Sun* editor John B. Bogart who introduced the concept of "Man Bites Dog" when he offered, "When a dog bites a man, that is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, that is news."

So what is it when a man bites another man in the midst of an athletic competition with nearly two million homes watching on television, with the eyes of not just the boxing world, but the entire sporting world—and even much of the non-sporting world—locked in? Then it is not just news. It's *front-page* news. It's the kind of news that remains news for weeks, months, and

PHOTO BY TODD WARSHAW/GETTY IMAGES

Lane addresses the media at the postfight press conference following the infamous "Bite Fight." Disqualifying Tyson garnered the no-nonsense referee a lot of publicity and helped him obtain his own TV show, but, sadly, in 2002 Lane suffered a debilitating stroke and is no longer in the public eye.

years to follow.

Ten years have passed since June 28, 1997, the night Mike Tyson bit off a chunk of Evander Holyfield's right ear, then sunk his teeth into "The Real Deal's" left ear as well, earning a third-round disqualification, a one-year expulsion from boxing, and a lifetime of infamy. So much has changed in the decade since, for Tyson, for Holyfield, for referee Mills Lane, and for all of the people peripherally involved. But one thing hasn't changed: Everybody still remembers exactly where they were and exactly how they felt when Tyson committed the most outrageous foul in sports history.

That's one popular technique for determining which news events qualify as truly earth-shaking. Everyone remembers what they were doing when they learned President Kennedy had been shot, where they were shortly before 9 a.m. on September 11, 2001, where they watched Neil Armstrong walk on the moon, and what television set they were glued to as they followed O.J. in the white Bronco. Tyson biting Holyfield's ear at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas to bring to a close what was, at the time, the richest boxing match in history, has had a similarly frozen-in-time quality. But has it had a lasting impact? Ten years later, is the boxing world still reeling from the consequences of that action?

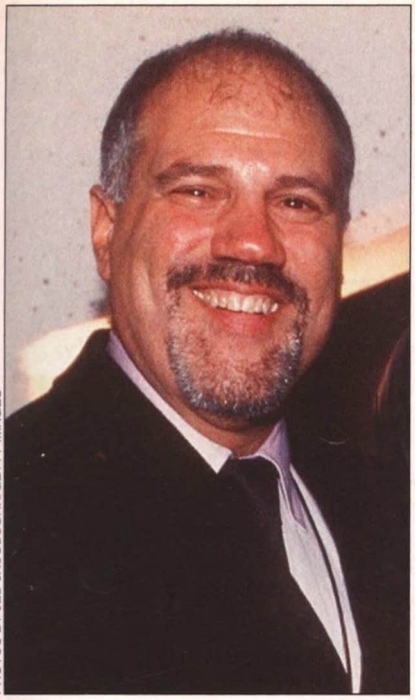
"All of these things become hurricanes," opined Jim Gray, the Showtime roving reporter who won an Emmy Award for his work with the microphone that night. "Whether it's Britney Spears shaving her head, or Don Imus' comments, all of these things capture a lot of attention, cause people to focus on them for the time being, and then we wait for somebody else to do something else and that becomes the next hurricane. I don't think anybody 10 years later is focused on Mike Tyson biting Evander's ear off. It was big when it happened, it caused a major hurricane, but the storm passed."

It's hard to deny, however, that boxing was a bigger sport in 1997 than it is now, particularly with regard to mainstream interest in the heavyweight division. Could the disappointment of how the rematch to Holyfield's electrifying 11th-round TKO of Tyson the previous November ended have kickstarted the public's diminishing interest in heavyweight boxing?

When you consider that Tyson's fight with Lennox Lewis five years later made even more money on pay-per-view than the Bite Fight did, it seems clear that the answer is no.

Jay Larkin, the executive producer of Showtime's boxing programming at the time of Holyfield-Tyson, agrees.

"I don't think the Bite Fight had any long-term negative impact on the sport," he said. "When that happened, the usual voices that cry out against the sport cried out against the sport. But they didn't need that to make a stand about how bad boxing is. Same old voices, same old people, a lot of people lined up to rail against Tyson, there's nothing new about that. I don't think anybody who was a fight fan, even a casual fight fan, made a decision when the next fight came up not to watch that fight because of what happened in



PHOTOS BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Jay Larkin (left) was the head of Showtime boxing when Holyfield-Tyson II took place, while Jim Gray (right) worked the fight as a broadcaster. Both shared their vivid recollection of the unprecedented event with THE RING for this article.

Holyfield-Tyson."

Part of the credit for that reality should probably go to Holyfield himself. When Tyson bit him, Holyfield chose not to retaliate with illegal tactics of his own, and he also chose not to quit fighting. His behavior was as admirable as anyone could possibly imagine. If he'd bitten back, it would have created the impression that boxing is overrun with immoral thugs. Instead, Tyson came off as such, but the rest of the sport of boxing came away with some of its dignity intact.

"Things always happen in boxing one way or another, good or bad, and bad don't last forever and good don't last forever," Holyfield told THE RING. "I think a big part of it is how the individual handles it—how I handled it. You know, I forgave him, and I could have made it bigger than what it is by wanting to sue or so many other things I could have done. But I realized all I have to do is forgive him. I won the fight, and what more do you ask for? So the boxing world moved on, I think. And one other reason why it's gone now is Mike Tyson ain't fighting anymore."

Indeed, Tyson, now 41, is out of boxing for good (we think). The Bite Fight wasn't the proverbial beginning of the end for him—in a sense, it was all downhill after he lost to Buster Douglas seven years prior—but it completed his transformation from skillful pugilistic mega-attraction to faded freakshow mega-attraction. Tyson endured 19 months of inactivity after losing his boxing license due to the bite, and returned as a rusty but still heavy-handed fighter with every bit as much drawing power as in his prime. His comeback fight against Frans Botha performed well on pay-per-view, he went 4-0 (4) with 2 no-contests after the Holyfield rematch (and would have been 5-0 if not for a positive marijuana test that nullified his TKO of Andrew Golota), and he positioned himself for another world title shot against Lewis that shattered all financial expectations (thanks in part to a press conference meltdown from Iron Mike that included a thigh bite and furthered his "what will he do next?" mystique).

But after Tyson lost to Lewis via one-sided beatdown, shocking knockout losses to the ordinary Danny Williams and sub-ordinary Kevin McBride soon

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

After getting bit the first time, Holyfield, reacting to the pain, turned his back, at which point Tyson pushed him from behind. Referee Lane penalized Tyson one point for the bite and another for the push. When Tyson bit Holyfield a second time, soon after action resume, he was disqualified.

HOLYFIELD BITES TOO

It was 10 years ago that Evander Holyfield was the victim of Mike Tyson's bite. But it was 17 years prior that Holyfield had his first incident involving in-ring chomping. And Holyfield was *not* the bitee.

"I was in the amateurs, I was 17, I was fighting this guy named Jacob Winters," Holyfield told THE RING, "and he hit me with a left hook and it was the first time I'd ever been knocked down. So when I got up, he came directly at me, and I started swinging hard as hell, hitting him, and he grabbed me, wouldn't let me go. And just instantly, I tried to bite him—but I had a double mouthpiece, so it just actually pinched him on the shoulder. But I tried to bite him on the shoulder to get him to let me go. And he did let me go.

"You know, biting is biting, but he was holding me and I couldn't get loose. It was frustration. You know, wrong is wrong. I was only 17, but wrong is wrong. But it wasn't a big issue. I don't think he ever told anyone, nobody in the ring knew that I did it, but I know that I did it."

—E.R.

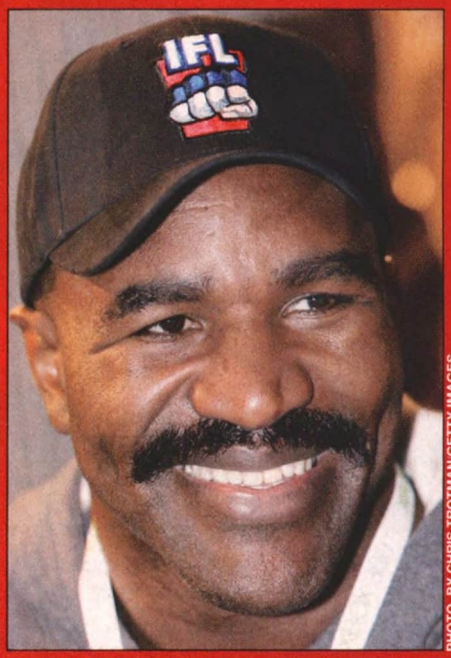


PHOTO BY CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Evander admits that he also once bit an opponent

followed. On June 28, 1997, Tyson's actions indicated he had no more fight in him. In June 2005, he made it official.

As of the 10th anniversary of the Bite Fight, Tyson was still a lost soul in search of peace, a one-time convicted rapist hoping to avoid yet another jail stint, this time for drug possession. The final chapter of his life has not yet been written. But when it is, among all of the outrageous tales and spectacular achievements, the Bite Fight will remain a key component of the story.

"It will be in the first paragraph," Gray said. "But the first paragraph will also say, 'Phenom, youngest heavyweight champion ever, convicted of rape, bit a man's ear off in the ring, and earned in excess of $300-million and ended up broke.' It's a long paragraph, and the ear bite is just a part of one sentence. That won't be the headline.

"I've talked with Mike about the bite, and he regrets it, he really does. It's one of several things that, if he could re-do them, I think he would."

If the Bite Fight was a low point for Tyson, it has to be considered a high point for the man who disqualified him, Lane. "Maximum Mills" didn't overreact or under-react. He maintained a semblance of order in the ring when a full-scale riot was about to break out. He kept his cool under dizzying conditions. As a result, he became a minor celebrity, earning further television fame as both a Wapner-style gavel banger on *Judge Mills Lane* and as the symbol of third men everywhere in Claymation form on MTV's popular *Celebrity Death Match*.

Sadly, in 2002, at the age of 65, Lane suffered a debilitating stroke. It's just fortunate it didn't come five years sooner and rob him of a moment when he would establish a lasting legacy as the ultimate no-nonsense official.

Many of the key players in the Bite Fight drama are no longer involved in boxing. Tyson's co-managers John Horne and Rory Holloway, the former of whom left a mark with a profanity-laced tirade in his postfight interview with Gray, were both dumped by Tyson soon after and never had future involvement with any significant fights or fighters. Tyson's trainer for that one fight, Richie Giachetti, has had minimal visibility since. Then-Nevada commissioner Marc Ratner, who memorably conferred with Lane over what action to take after the first bite, left his post in 2006 to work for the UFC mixed martial arts organization. Two-thirds of Showtime's ringside team, Ferdie Pacheco (who was the first to identify that Tyson had bit Holyfield) and Bobby Czyz, are no longer in broadcasting. Even Larkin parted ways with Showtime about a year-and-a-half ago, and though he still remains involved in boxing as an adviser to super middleweight champ Joe Calzaghe, his primary career pursuit is in putting on shows as a Broadway producer (plus he advises an MMA outfit called the IFL).

The bite had its effects not only on individuals, but on organizations involved in boxing as well. In large part because of the postfight madness at the MGM Grand (including gunshots, according to some on the scene) that led to the provisional locking down of the casino and millions in lost revenue, many Las Vegas casinos temporarily shied away from big-time boxing, leading the Atlantic City boxing scene to prosper for a little while and host many of the major heavyweight fights (Lewis-Golota, Shannon Briggs-George Foreman, Lewis-Briggs) that followed. That riotous scene also led Showtime to adopt safety guidelines and strategies for its employees, instructing them to protect themselves first and worry about their jobs second. In meetings before bouts that appeared to pack high potential for mayhem, the Showtime crew even began establishing escape routes.

You could argue that the riotous scene that followed the bite had an impact on the sport comparable to that of the bite itself. And it's the images from that postfight madness that still flash through Larkin's mind 10 years later, more so than that oft-replayed clip of Tyson leaning in and getting his ounce of flesh.

"It really was the most chaotic scene I've ever seen in 20 years of being involved in boxing. I wasn't at Fan Man,

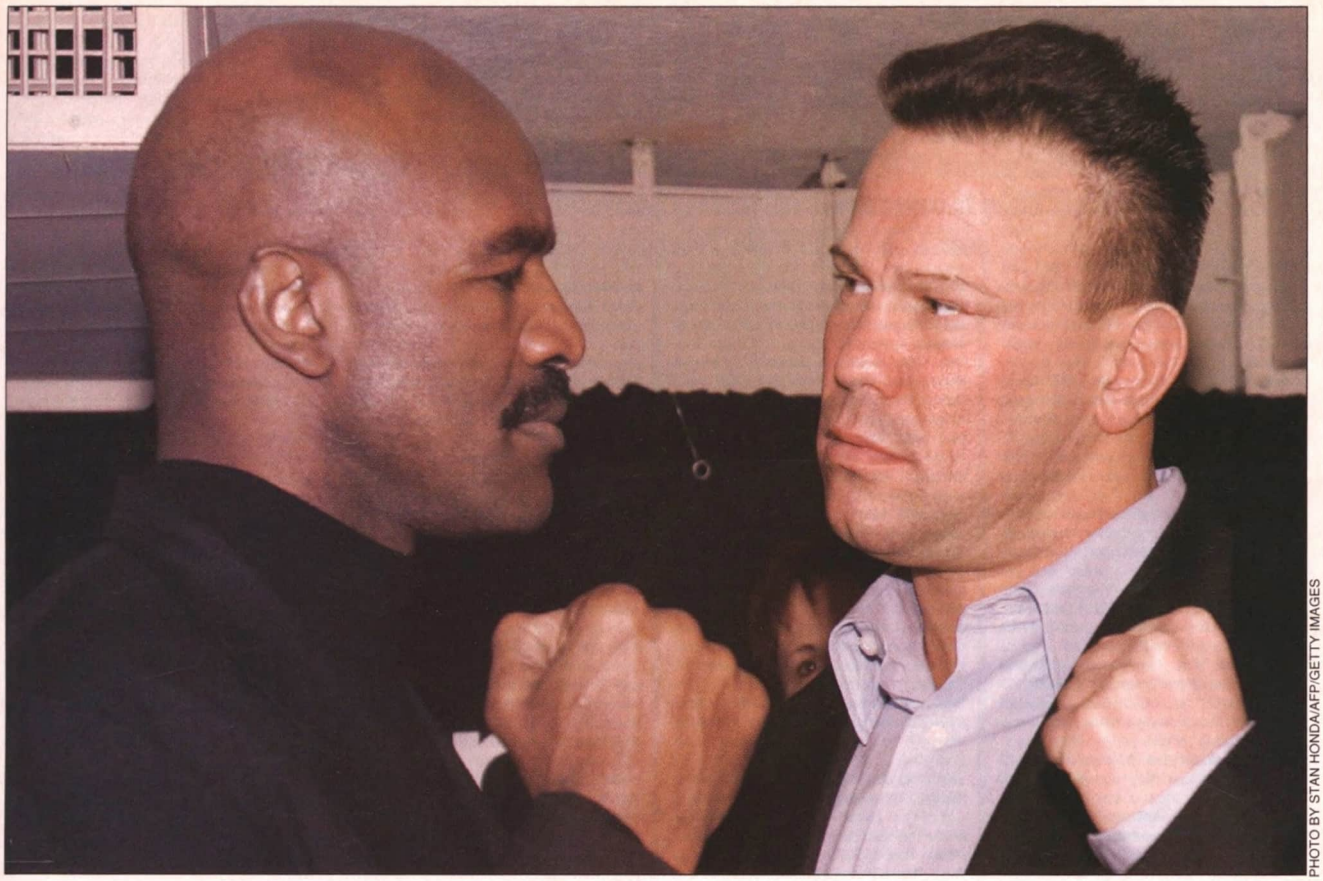


PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

If you look closely at Holyfield's ear in this recent shot of him squaring off with soon-to-be kayo victim Vinny Maddalone, you can see the missing part of his right ear. Holyfield says that it's still the first thing people look at when they meet him.

but I imagine that came close. But other than Fan Man, I can't imagine anything else comparing to this," Larkin said. "There was a hallway behind the Grand Garden Arena and there were people lying there on the floor, lying on stretchers, it looked like some civic catastrophe. Also, out by the TV trucks, there were school busses being filled with perpetrators who were being led out of the arena in handcuffs. Some of them were being arrested for what they were doing in the arena, but there were others who were being taken out because they were wanted suspects who the police had identified prior to the fight!

"So it really was a highly combustible situation, and when Mike bit Evander's ears, he lit the match. And everything just blew up."

Larkin's most surreal moment, however, was still a few hours away from happening. It was in the middle of the night that he received a phone call from a man telling him he'd found the missing piece of Holyfield's ear and asking Larkin if he wanted it.

"I don't remember if he was trying to sell it to me or not, but he said he'd found it trampled in the middle of the ring. I just remember we called a doctor and he said, 'At this point, it's just a piece of tissue, it's no good to Evander, it's like a piece of bacon.'"

So if Tyson could transform one of the greatest heavyweights of all-time into breakfast meat, you have to assume he could have done much worse to Jim Gray if he'd wanted to. One of the most unforgettable parts of the night for television viewers was Gray's interview with Don King and the rest of Team Tyson, including a terrifyingly unstable Iron Mike himself.

Amazingly, Gray says he felt no fear while conducting the interviews that would win him his Special Individual Achievement Emmy.

"I never felt in peril with John, Don, Rory, or Mike," Gray recalled. "It just didn't cross my mind. They'd never had a problem with me in the past, I'd never felt uncomfortable in their company, and I didn't on that evening. You have to understand, I'm just doing my job; I'm not thinking I'm in danger. Maybe in retrospect I've looked at the tape and thought, *God, these people are emotionally charged, and the questions that I'm asking, what was I thinking?* But I wasn't thinking that at the time at all. I never felt that Mike was going to hurt me."

It's too bad Evander Holyfield can't say the same. Holyfield's career didn't suffer one bit (pun partially intended) from that night—if anything, his calm and courage enhanced his legend—but his physical appearance was forever altered by Tyson's teeth. Now 44 and still a fringe contender, having gone 7-5-2 (3) against mostly world-class opposition since the Bite Fight, the future first-ballot Hall of Famer has long since put the bite behind him. But the same cannot be said of the average man on the street.

"When people see me," he said, "usually somebody will be like, 'Is that Holyfield?' And then the person would come and lean their head and look at me, look at my ear, and say, 'That's him.'"

Ten years on, the Bite Fight doesn't define either of its participants. But it does make one of them a whole lot easier to ID. ■

BACK ISSUES OF KO

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June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

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Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

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Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

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Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

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Then and now: The still formidable-looking Chuvalo as he appears today (opposite), approaching his 70th birthday, and as he looked in 1965 (below), at the peak of his 22-year professional career.

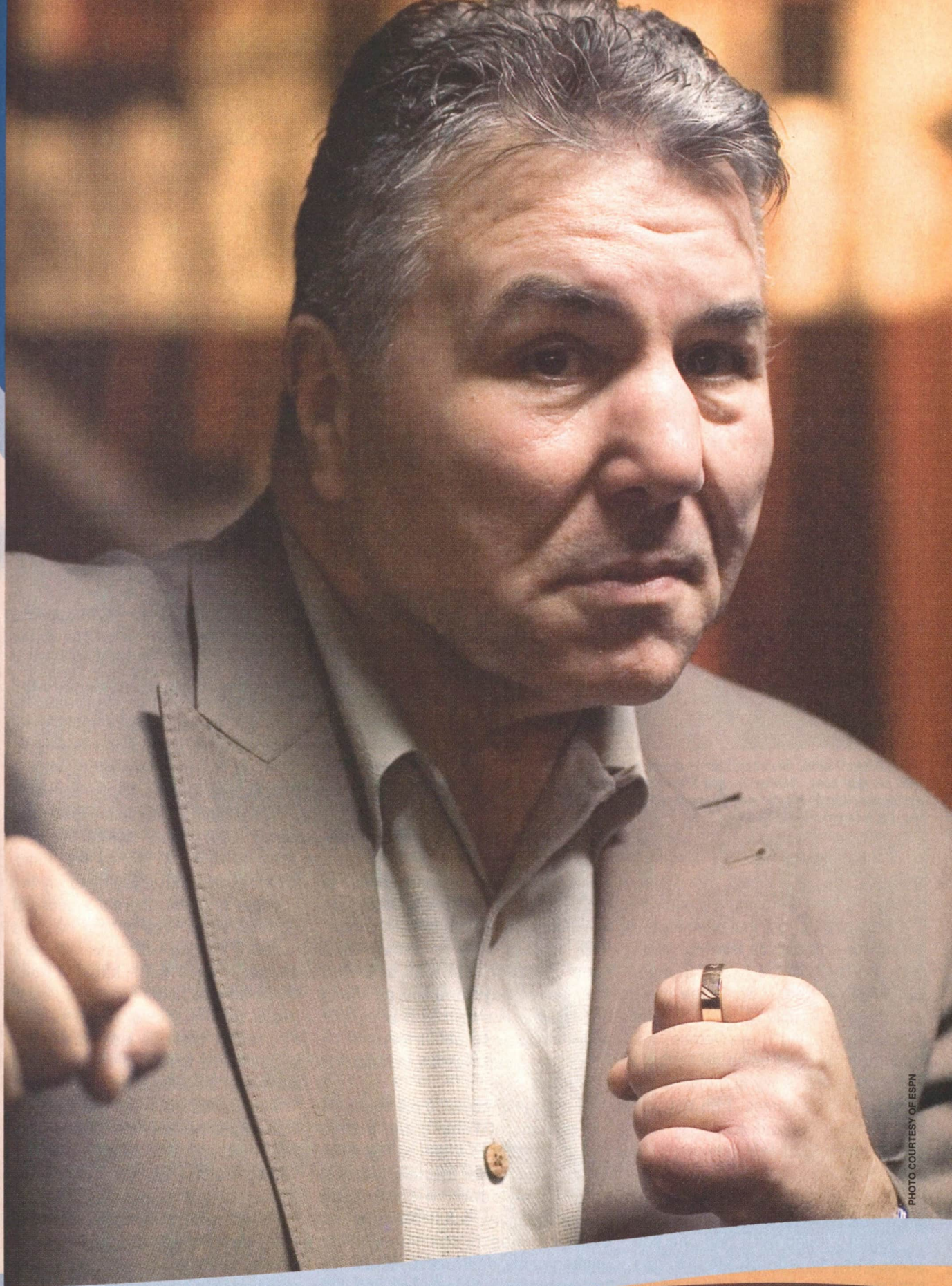
The RING Update

CANADIAN HEAVYWEIGHT GEORGE CHUVALO

"The Pain Never Goes Away"

There were tears in his eyes because there is no other way to tell the story, no way of emptying that interminable reservoir of pain and grief, suffering and memories. The CD player in the car supplied eerie accompaniment, a song written by Warren Zevon called "Carmelita," with haunting lyrics and a chilling chorus that, strangely, provided some kind of solace as he broke off from his story to sing the words:

Carmelita, hold me tighter
I think I'm sinking down
And I'm all strung out on heroin
On the outskirts of town



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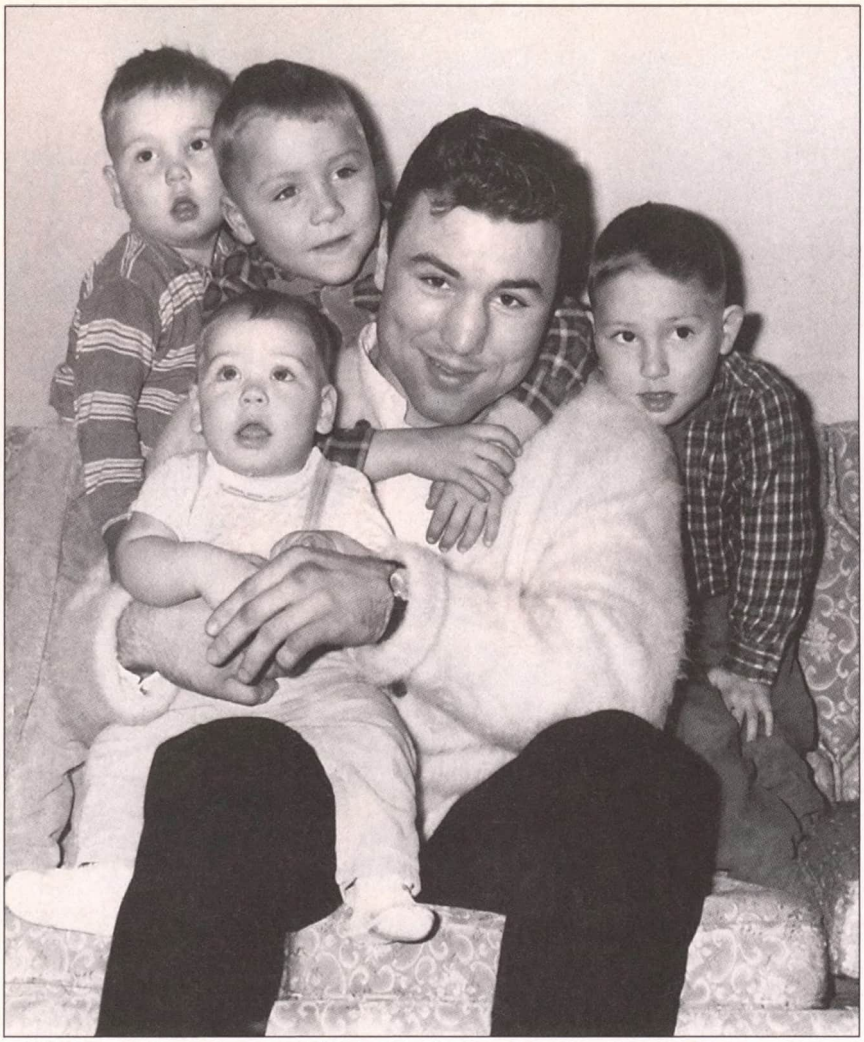


Chuvalo could never have dreamed of the nightmare to come when he posed for this 1964 photo with his four sons. George Jr. and Steven (to the left of their father's head) both died of drug overdoses. Jessie (on his dad's lap) shot himself. Thankfully, Mitchell (wearing the checkered shirt) is a Toronto schoolteacher.

"I like the song like I like to torture myself," he explained, his voice strong, his face betraying few signs of the wars and horrors that have visited him inside and outside the ring, much less the fact that he turns 70 years old in September. "Someone gave me this CD a couple of days ago, and I've been playing it ever since. It's about the futility of being an addict. I know about the futility and I know the horrible consequences. I go out and talk about it. I speak to young kids and it helps, just like listening to a sad song helps, but the truth is that it's hard to deal with, hard for me and hard for my family.

"When I found out I had one son who was an addict (Jesse, his youngest, who became hooked on heroin), I actually had three (Georgie Jr. and Steven were addicts too). Jesse got hooked in days because of the pain he was in from a motorcycle accident. Doctors put him on a powerful narcotic after he underwent a knee operation, but took him off it after seven days and the pain was unbearable. He went to a party one night, complained about the pain he was in, and that was his introduction to heroin."

As he parked outside his house on the outskirts of Toronto and led the way downstairs to a den with a large TV, it became clear that this, too, was only an introduction to George Chuvalo's story, a harrowing story, overwhelming in the scale of its unimaginably destructive detail. He removed a DVD from its box, put it in the player, and sat down.

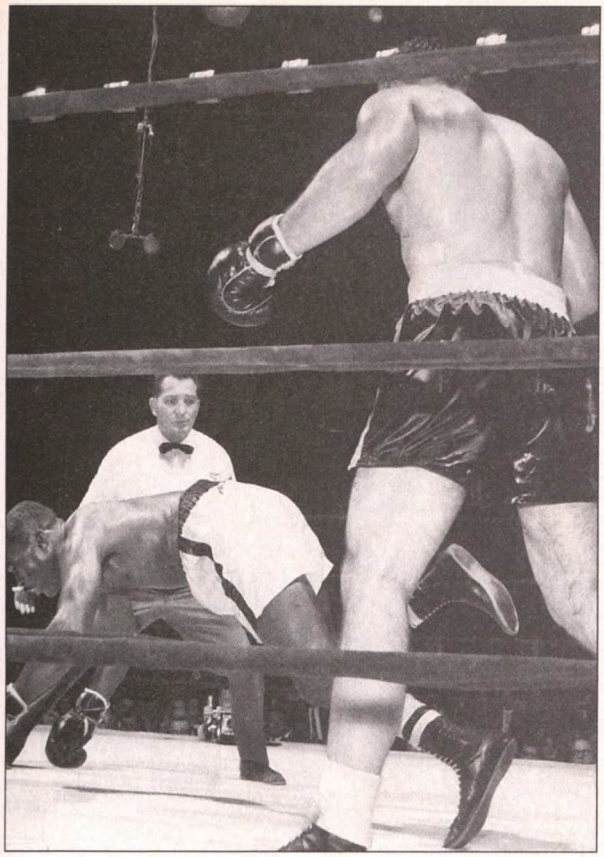
"When I go out and do my talks about drugs, I show this DVD," he said. "This gives people some idea of what it is I've been through. People think because you're laughing, cracking a joke, and you seem fine that you're doing okay and everything's all right again. But it never goes away, never. Every day it's with you, every minute of the day ... this DVD will give you an idea of what I'm saying."

The documentary was filmed and first broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Fifth Estate* team in 1995. Jesse's tale, told in uncompromising terms, revealed a history in and out of reform school, a fragile temperament and pent-up anger inside his troubled personality.

Mitch, the oldest of Chuvalo's four sons, now a high school teacher in Toronto, spoke about his growing dread that "someone in my family could die" when he learned from his father that his three brothers were hooked on heroin. Steven, at the time, five months from being paroled from the federal penitentiary where he served a total of five years for theft and armed robbery, crimes that fed his habit, articulated the hopelessness felt by all three brothers as they slipped into the abyss.

"I basically stuck the needle in and never took it out," Steven said. "I spent every bit of money that I had. When I talk about myself and my two younger brothers, there's a sense of hopelessness. We almost had this sense of feeling worthless. Where it comes from, I don't know. I don't know, but I've had it for years. I didn't grow up in the perfect family. However, I know us kids were never abused. We knew we were loved. I can never pinpoint one single factor."

Jesse was 20 years old when he walked into his bedroom on February 18, 1985, and shot himself. Georgie, finding his own addiction impossible to overcome, expressed a longing "to be with my brother Jess" and on Halloween 1993, four weeks after coming out of jail, his wish was granted when he died of a heroin overdose in a shabby hotel room in Toronto's



Chuvalo watches kayo victim Doug Jones head for the canvas in the 11th round of their October 1964 bout in Madison Square Garden. The victory was supposed to set up a bout with Sonny Liston, if Liston was able to regain the title from Muhammad Ali.

drugs-strewn west end.

The agony of losing a second son proved unbearable for Chuvalo's wife, Lynn. Two days after Georgie was buried, she lay down on his bed and swallowed the contents of a bottle of prescription drugs. When Chuvalo returned home, he found her dead.

"My mother was four days past her 16th birthday when she had me," Mitch tried to rationalize. "She was 20 years old when she had four boys. Four years later, she had my sister. She essentially gave up her youth. She was a baby having babies, and I think she poured so much hope, so much of her life into her children's lives, that when the natural order was upset, when two children died before she did, she was crushed, as only a mother can be crushed."

The cameras followed Chuvalo on one of his many visits to Steven in prison.

"My father's never given up hope," Steven insisted. "When he says to me, 'You know, kid, I need you to be well, I need you to be okay so I'll be okay,' he's saying it with conviction and he's always in tears when he says things like that. It hits home to me now and I say to myself, *Man, I've got to get better, I've got to be well for him and the rest of my family.*"

When the documentary ended, Chuvalo rose from his couch and revealed a postscript, the final bombshell.

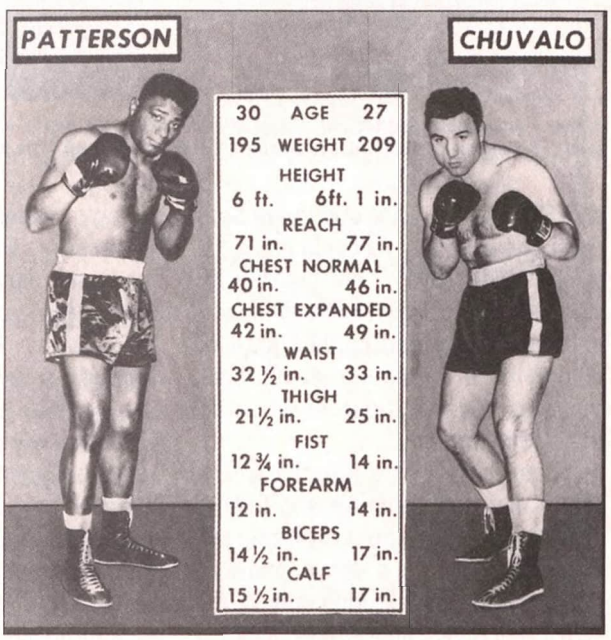
"At this stage I have to tell the people who come to my presentations that Steven died two weeks after coming out of prison from a heroin overdose. My daughter, Vanessa, found him dead in her flat," he said, shaking his head. "It's sad because you can see from the footage that Stevie's articulate and he's a handsome kid, and you think he's going to get better, that he'll come out and beat his addiction to heroin. I was in Albuquerque the day Stevie died, August 6, 1996. Johnny Tapia had been fighting, and when I got back to Toronto, I saw my wife (Joanne, whom he married on January 27, 1995) and she had a look of utter dismay on her face. I said to her, 'Joanne, what's the matter?' All she could say was that we had to talk, so I made it easy for her. 'Steven's dead, isn't he?' I said, and she nodded her head.

"It was hard to accept and it's still hard to accept today. I guess I do get some solace from going around and speaking to people about it, and if I can help kids who may be vulnerable to drugs, then some good can come out of all of this."

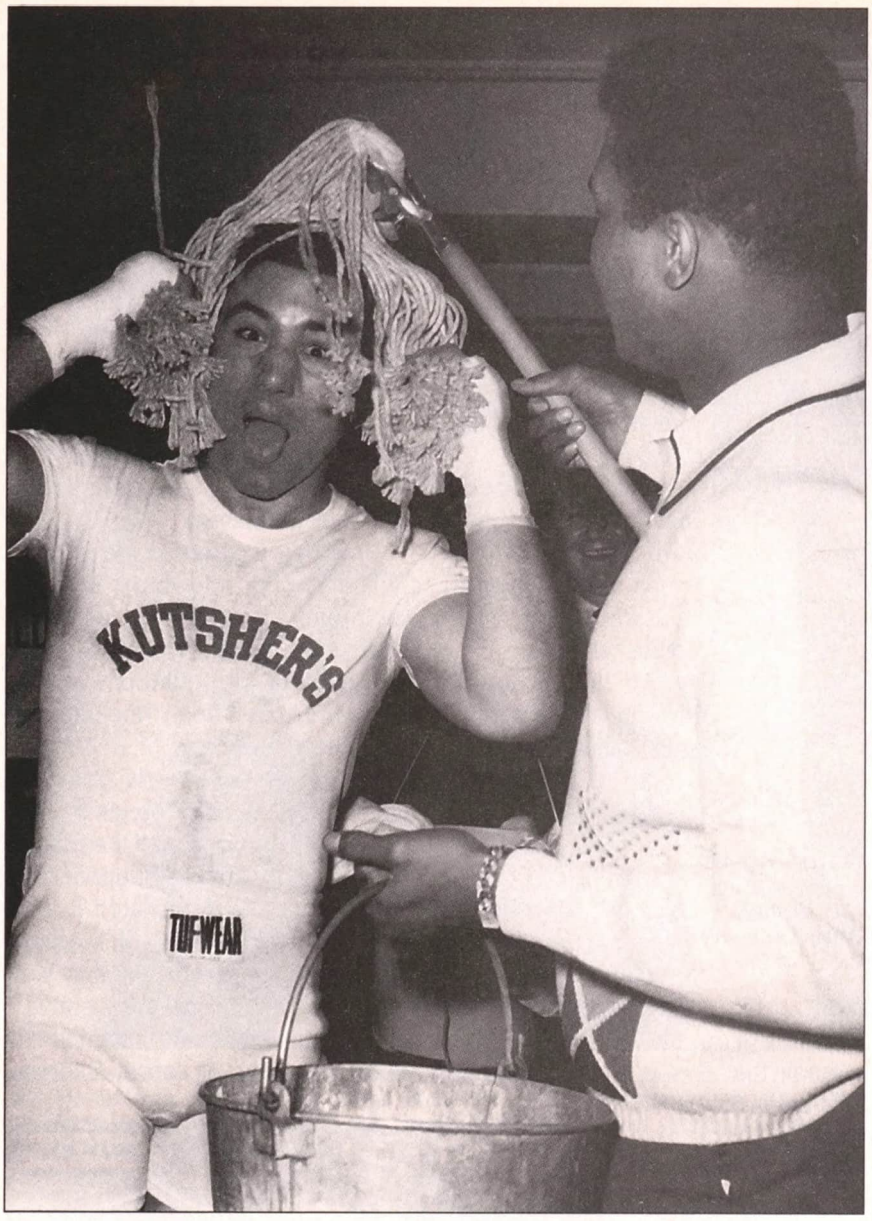
(Chuvalo's Fight Against Drugs program has been recognized across Canada, and in 1998 he received the Order of Canada, his country's highest civic honor, for his continuous quest to help drug addicts to overcome their problems.)

"How has it affected me? When Lynn died, I'm told that I spent a month-and-a-half in bed, just lying there, and I couldn't get out. I must have gone to the bathroom when I needed to, but I don't remember. I don't remember any of it. At one stage, I was constantly going in search of Stevie and Georgie in drug houses and trying to get them back on track, but it didn't happen, and unless you've been through it, you can't know what it's like. It's a pain that never goes away is the only way I can describe it. It's always there."

For years, Chuvalo kept Lynn's ashes and those of Jesse, Georgie,



The tale-of-the-tape for Chuvalo's 1965 bout with Floyd Patterson. Although the Canadian lost a close 12-round decision, their battle was selected as The Ring's Fight of the Year and helped Chuvalo get a crack at Ali the following year.



Always a good sport, Chuvalo hams it up with Ali prior to the first of their two fights. Ali, who gave most of his opponents humorous nicknames, christened George "The Washerwoman."

and Steven in a wardrobe in his bedroom, the only way he could make his family whole again. To this day he sleeps with the light on. Yet, remarkably, he has moved on with his life, displaying a toughness at his core that was always apparent when he stepped in the ring.

"There are some knocks which you're more prepared for and they're easier to take," he emphasized, switching DVDs to a documentary of his first fight against Muhammad Ali. "We'll watch this. It's happier."

In a 22-year professional career, he was never knocked off his feet and faced the best of heavyweight boxing's golden era: Ali twice, Floyd Patterson, Ernie Terrell, Oscar Bonavena, Jimmy Ellis, Jerry Quarry, Buster Mathis, George Foreman, and Joe Frazier. For two decades he reigned as the Canadian champion and by 1962 he was ranked number two in the world. In 1964, at Madison Square Garden, he knocked out Doug Jones in the 11th round and was set to challenge Sonny Liston for the world heavyweight championship, if Liston managed to regain the title from Ali at Lewiston, Maine, in their controversial 1965 rematch.

"After I beat Mike DeJohn on points in 1963—Liston was still champ—they called me up from Philadelphia, sent me a ticket, and brought me down to discuss a title shot," Chuvalo recalled. "They wanted me to fight on a Dapper Dan Christmas show in Pittsburgh. I had a question for them, 'How much?' figuring that I would get 100 grand, which was big money in those days. He said, '$25,000.' I smiled and told him that I turned that down for a Liston fight in 1958. 'Why would I fight for that five years later when the money is weaker?' It was nuts. I said, 'I'll fight for $75,000. Call me if you can come up with the money.' I went back to Toronto and they never called.

"So Liston fought Ali and lost. Then they boxed in Lewiston, Maine, and the contracts were all set up. I was going to fight Liston, if he won, and Patterson was going to fight Ali. Liston took a dive, and I didn't fight him. There's no doubt in my mind that Liston took a dive. After the fight, I got up in the ring and castigated Ali. It wasn't his fault, but it was a bulls_ _ _ fight."

Chuvalo had lost to Patterson by close decision, 6-5-1, 8-4, and 7-5 in rounds, in THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1965, but secured a shot at Terrell's WBA heavyweight title that November.

"Ali was the fastest puncher I ever fought and the second fastest was Floyd Patterson. We had a helluva fight at Madison Square Garden," Chuvalo said. "It was suicide for Floyd to walk into Liston the way he did in their two fights, but he froze anyway. He was mentally paralyzed. In his mind, he could never beat Liston. But he was a really formidable fighter, underrated today.

"Anyway, I got the fight with Terrell in Toronto and blocked 90 percent of the punches he threw at me. Most of his shots he threw far enough to only hit my hands. After the fight, I didn't have a scratch on my face, and when the final bell rang, all the photographers came into my corner, expecting that I would be announced as the winner. Then the decision was announced, and they gave it to him, they scurried across to his corner. But everyone knew I won the fight.

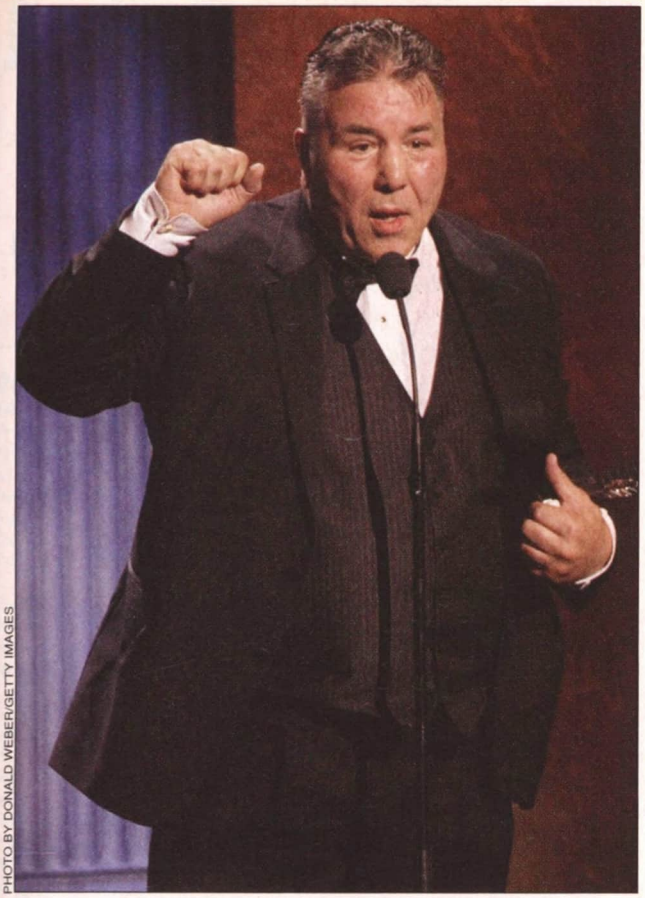


PHOTO BY DONALD WEBER/GETTY IMAGES

Chuvalo delivers an acceptance speech after receiving his star on Canada's Walk of Fame in 2005. He has also been awarded the Order of Canada, his country's highest civic honor, for his Fight Against Drugs campaign.

Four months later, Chuvalo challenged Ali, again at Maple Leaf Gardens, and his brutal body attack put the champion in the hospital, although the decision after 15 rounds was not in doubt. Ali's jab kept pumping into Chuvalo's face, though the challenger never stopped coming, for this was the only way he knew to fight.

"Ali was supposed to fight Ernie Terrell, but the fight was chased out of the United States because of Ali's stance over Vietnam, which made him very unpopular at the time," Chuvalo reminded. "Now they say he was right, but at that time he was a social pariah. I got a call to fight Ali instead and had only 17 days to prepare, but I took it. I had to call Detroit, New York, Chicago, Miami, Houston to get a bunch of sparring partners and get guys up here. Everything was in a hurry. If I had had a couple of months, it would have been better, but I was always in shape between fights anyway. I trained as hard as I could and my plan was to wear him down with body-shots. I knew he was a hard guy to hit from a distance, so my intention was to crowd him, get him on the ropes, immobilize him so he couldn't work in the center of the ring.

"I was fairly successful in the fight, it was a tough fight and they gave it to him. Afterwards, I said I won the fight and someone said, 'How do you figure that?' I looked at him and said, 'Look who went to the hospital with bleeding kidneys and look who went to bed with his wife.' We went to a party and got dancing, and I said to my wife, 'Maybe I should have danced more in the fight.'

"I met Ali most recently on October 20, 2002, at the Rogers Centre, the old SkyDome, and it's sad to see what's become of him with Parkinson's. He's like an old man. If you can't exercise and your muscles atrophy, your body shrinks, you get old-man syndrome, that's what happens. For the old ticker to remain healthy, you have to move your body, you have to work out.

"But in a strange way, I don't feel sorry for him, because he looks happy. He still looks content, as if he's at peace with everything. Peace emanates from his soul and the words he uses, the way he talks, he's not bitter about anything, he still laughs and his face looks peaceful. I know he can't move his face like he did, but he still looks at peace, happy. And if he's happy, you can't argue with that. So I feel sad when I see him, but I don't

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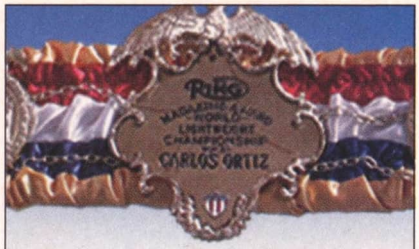

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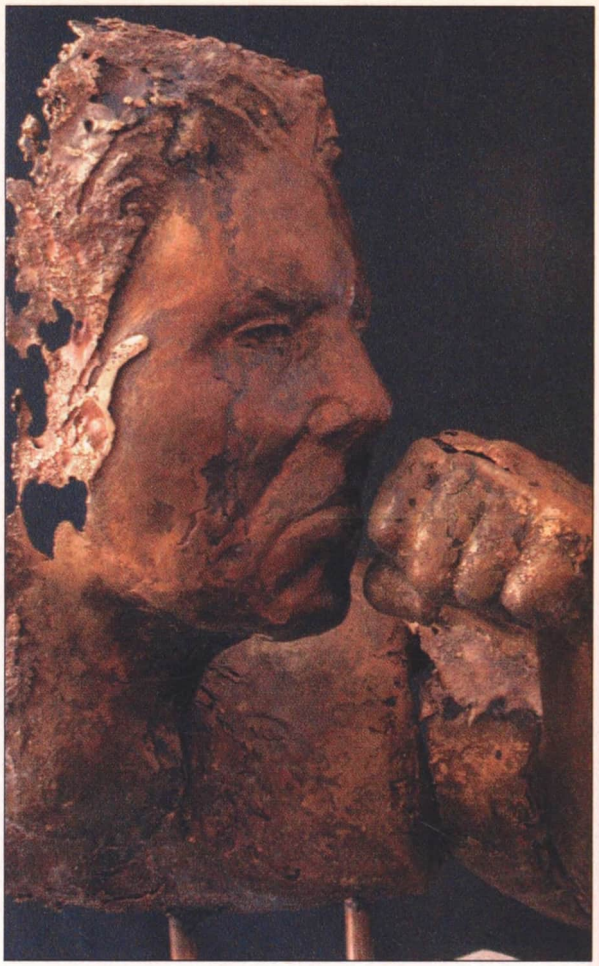
feel sorry for him. He believes in Allah and his faith helps him a lot.

"The people that day in the SkyDome were going nuts and they asked us to take a picture for the stadium magazine. He came up to me real close, touched my head and said, 'Hey man, you got some pretty hair.' It was cute that he's still able to come out with the one-liners and make people smile."

Chuvalo never challenged again for the title, though he fought both Frazier and Foreman before they won the heavyweight crown.

"Joe was relentless and George was a good whacker," Chuvalo said. "He hit me a good hook on the ropes and I went *boing*. I was stunned, but I could see his punches and started punching back before they stopped the fight."



Canadian sculpture Gabrielle F. Horvath has cast a life-sized bronze bust of Chuvalo, which they intend to sell at auction to raise funds for Fight Against Drugs.

There would be another big night in Vancouver against Ali, but Chuvalo was unable to summon up the intensity of old, though he hurt the former champ with several hard hooks.

"Ali was at his best the first fight, in his prime or approaching his prime," Chuvalo insisted. "The second fight was after his 3½-year layoff, and he wasn't the same. He wasn't quite as fast and he wasn't as consistent. He had flashes of speed, but he was just a little slower in his hands and legs. I'd lost the first fight, so I knew what I had to do better. I got down lower and was able to block the punches better. Angelo Dundee told me recently that I hurt him with a good left hook at one point in the fight, and Ali was out, but I didn't realize. But what can you do? It was great to share the ring with him twice."

Chuvalo had seven more fights and won them all before retiring after his December 1978 bout against George Jerome with an overall record of 73-18-2 (64). In February 2007, a life-sized bronze bust of Canada's enduring heavyweight contender by the sculptor Gabrielle F. Horvath was unveiled at the Bloor Street Boxing and Fitness Gym in Toronto, a fitting tribute to an iron man. Both artist and subject intend to auction off the bust to raise funds for the Fight Against Drugs campaign.

"My boxing career spanned 31 years, from the age of 10 to 41, and that's a long time," said Chuvalo. "The scars on my face, I always say, read like a history book, and I like my history book, I really do."

The other scars tell a different story and it is one that George Chuvalo, despite his personal losses, relates just as passionately. When CBC put together that story, the title said it all: "Still Standing." ■

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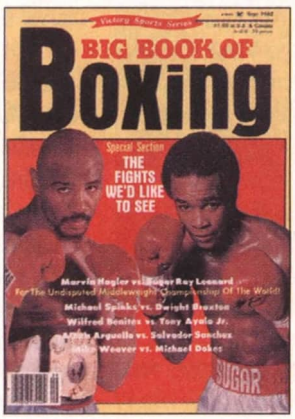

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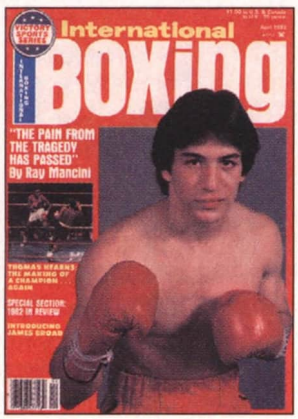

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Heavyweights

David Haye KO 1 Tomasz Bonin
Corrie Sanders W 10 Daniel Bispo
Vladimir Virchis W 12 Paolo Vidoz
Josue Blocus W 12 David Cadieux
Pedro Carrion W 10 Ozcan Cetinkaya
Eddie Chambers W 10 Dominick Guinn
Sebastian Ceballos W 10
Orlando Farias
Malik Scott W 10 Charles Shufford
Chris Arreola KO 8 Malcolm Tann
Chazz Witherspoon KO 3 Joe Stofle
Bermane Stiverne KO 3 Earl Ladson
Rudolf Kraj KO 3 Mauro Ordiales
Vaughn Parham KO 3
Kenyatte Ravenell
Tom Okusi KO 1 Eddie Dyle
Fabio Maldonado KO 1 Paulo Aragao

Cruiserweights

Johnathon Banks KO 3 Lloyd Bryan
Mohamed Azzaoui W 12
Nermin Sabanovic
Paul Jennette KO 5 Robert Marsh
Thomas Hartmann KO 5 Dirk Georgi
Denis Rekhin KO 1 Daniil Prakapsou
William Guthrie D 6 James Johnson

Light Heavyweights

Stipe Drews W 12 Silvio Branco
(Wins WBA Title)
Glen Johnson KO 11 Montell Griffin
Adrian Diaconu KO 3 Rico Hoye
Thomas Ulrich KO 1 Leonardo Turchi
Pablo Nievas KO 6 Fernando Vera
Tiwon Taylor KO 3 Karl Willis
Eduardo Franca KO 2 Valdinei de Souza
Ivan Jauregui KO 1 Jorge Valenzuela
Shaun George W 8 Richard Hall
Tomas Adamek W 8 Sandro Siproshvili
Jameson Bostic KO 3 Craig Ganby

Super Middleweights

Juergen Braehmer W 12
Hector Javier Velazco
Lukas Wilaschek W 10 Ali Yildirim
William Joppy KO 1 Virgil McClendon
Andre Ward KO 6 Dhafir Smith
Martin Bruer W 10 Jose Mazurier
Mohammad Said KO 1
Joel Pereira da Silva

Middleweights

Jermain Taylor W 12 Cory Spinks
(Retains World Title)
Felix Sturm W 12 Javier Castillejo
(Regains WBA Title)
Kelly Pavlik KO 7 Edison Miranda
John Duddy W 10 Dupre Strickland
Joey Gilbert KO 10 Juan Astorga
Kgotso Motau KO 12 Kabelo Ndlovu
Daniel Geale W 12
Parkpoom Jangphonak
Javier Mamani W 10 Jose Dos Santos
Joe Greene W 8 Jose Spearman
Renan St. Juste KO 5 Christopher Henry
Mariano Carrera KO 4 Oney Valdez
Andy Lee KO 1 Clinton Bonds
Tracey Brewer KO 1 Tim Scache

Junior Middleweights

Floyd Mayweather W 12
Oscar De La Hoya
(Wins WBC Title)
Sergie Dzinziruk KO 11
Carlos Nascimento
Alisultan Nadirbegov W 10 Vince Phillips
Marco Schulze W 12 Turgay Uzun
Joel Julio KO 1 Mauro Lucero
Pietro d'Alessio KO 8 Daniel Kaefer
Ryan Waters KO 9 Jay Sims
Daniel Dawson KO 5 Lee Oti
Sergio Gabriel Martinez KO 4
Saul Roman
Stephane Desormiers KO 3
Jimmy LeBlanc
Pawel Wolak KO 2 Anthony Little
Mike Miranda KO 2
Alex Oliveira de Melo
Vanes Martirosyan KO 2
Nelson Estupinan
Conjestina Achieng KO 2 Jalala Salum
Jozsef Matolcsi KO 1 Ignacio Fraga
Ronald Hearns W 8 Dennis Sharpe

Welterweights

Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12
Joseph Makaringe
Kevin Anderson W 12 Eamonn Magee
Tsuyoshi Kamiishi W 10 Hiroyuki Ioku
Matthias Pelk W 10 Tim Ruchholz
Robert Medley KO 9 Somchai Nakbalee
Ulises Duarte KO 8 Joel Juarez
Andre Berto KO 7 Martinus Clay
Kenryo Matsumoto KO 4
Yodsaksit Por Muangsurin
Ushiwakamaru Akibei KO 4
Darsim Nanggala
Saul Alvarez KO 4 Victor Marquez
Doel Carrasquillo KO 3 Aaron Torres
Damon Antoine KO 2 Mike Carrigan
Ulises Duarte KO 1 Gerardo Mellado
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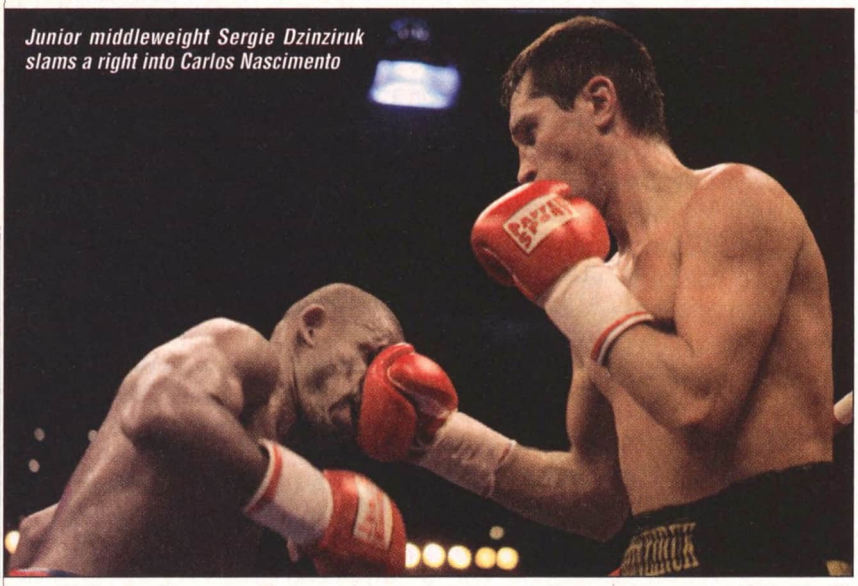

Junior middleweight Sergie Dzinziruk slams a right into Carlos Nascimento

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Junior Welterweights

Guillermo Mosquera W 12
Lance Gostelow
Ricardo Torres W 12 Arturo Morua
Willy Blain W 12 Pablo Godoy
Hiroshige Osawa W 10
Yasumasa Yamaoka
Francisco Bojado W 10
Dairo Jose Esalas
Daniel Zell KO 9 Kevin Mattausch
Kiatchai Singwancha KO 5 Kiuchi Sanya
Damian Frias KO 2 Travis Hartman
Michael Torres KO 1 Jason Jordan
Lucas Matthysse KO 1 Ramon Duran
Doo Suk Oh KO 1 Ho Pyung Jung

Lightweights

Juan Diaz KO 8 Acelino Freitas
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Jose Miguel Cotto D 12
Prawet Singwangcha
(*For Vacant WBA Title*)
Zahir Raheem W 10 Cristobal Cruz
Humberto Gutierrez W 12 Angel Rivero
Jose Alfaro KO 8 DeMarcus Corley
Yuri Romanov KO 3 Tontcho Tontchev
Michael Gomez KO 3 Daniel Thorpe
Sergio Rivera W Disq. 7 Jaime Orrantia
Ronny McField KO 6 Marlon Aguilar
Juan Garza KO 3 Jorge Pimentel
Jessica Rakoczy W 8 Terri Blair

Junior Lightweights

Edwin Valero KO 8 Nobuhito Honmo
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Israel Perez W 12 Rene Gonzalez
Sirimongkol Singwangcha W 12
Thong Por Chokchai
Agnaldo Nunes W 12 Carlos Navarro
Mohammed Medjadji W 10
Youssouf Djibaba
Yoshimitsu Yashiro W 10 Judefil Aclo
Carlos Gamez W 10 Bernardo Montes
Justin Juuko W 10 Joseph Miyumo
Yusuke Kobori KO 7 Junji Murakami
Ronny McField KO 6 Marlon Aguilar
Michael Lozada KO 4 Jose Montes
Rene Mahling KO 1 Nico Schroeder
Jose Miguel Aguiniga W 8 Joe Morales

Featherweights

Rocky Juarez W 12 Jose Hernandez
Francisco Valdez KO 12
Esteban Jimenez
Hidenori Kobayashi W 10 Yuta Nagai
Hee Jae Jo W 10 Fernando Otic

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Welterweight Andre Berto hones in on Martinus Clay

Juan Burgos KO 6 Moises Zamudio
Walter Estrada KO 5 Arcelio Ibarra
Terdsak Jandaeng KO 3 Leed Shabu
Leonilo Miranda KO 3 Roman Campos
Rashiem Jefferson W 8 Carlos Diaz

Junior Featherweights

Rey Bautista W 12 Sergio Medina
Luis Perez W 12 Andres Cabrera
Alex Escaner D 12 Jake Verano
Nobuto Ikehara W 10
Manabu Fukushima
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 7 Jorge Otero
Andres Ledesma KO 5 Gary Stark

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa W 12
Simpiwe Vetyeka
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Silence Mabuza KO 5
Mbwana Matumla
Daniel Diaz W 10 Timur Shailezov
Robert Allanic KO 7 Chang Jae Kwon
Alejandro Valdez KO 6 Heriberto Ruiz
Daisuke Maruyama KO 2
Kaona Klongpajol
Kenbun Torres KO 1
Kaenkartnoi Polkrahan
Fatuma Zarika KO 7 Iliana Boneva

Junior Bantamweights

Alexander Munoz W 12 Nobuo Nashiro
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Martin Castillo KO 5 Jorge Ramiro
Jose Navarro KO 6 Roberto Gomez
Nonito Donaire KO 1 Kevin Hudgins
Daiki Kameda KO 2 Pingping Tepura
Osvalmir Damasceno KO 1
Jose Rodrigues
Tetsuya Hisada W 8 Yuki Takemoto

Flyweights

Walberto Ramos W 10
John Alberto Molina
Yukio Wadamine KO 3
Fahkanong Singdongthai
Goro Tachibana KO 2
Saksith Wor Surapol
Denkaosan Kaovichit KO 2
Alwi Alhabsy

Junior Flyweights

Hugo Cazares KO 2 Wilfrido Perez
(*Retains World Title*)
Ulises Solis KO 9 Jose Aguirre
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Nerys Espinoza W 10 Jose Bernal

Strawweights

Ivan Calderon W 12 Ronald Barrera
Yoshihiro Hisada W 10 Toshiki Ogawa
Erik Ramirez KO 1 Vicente Rivera
Roman Gonzalez KO 1
Jose Luis Varela
Yasutaka Kuroki Tech. Win 7
Teruo Misawa
Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum W 6
Jack Abisa

Hugo Cazares KO 2 Wilfrido Perez

Las Vegas, Nevada: In his first defense of THE RING junior flyweight championship and his fifth defense of the WBO title, Cazares drew a ridiculously easy assignment in Perez, who had somehow obtained the WBO's mandatory-challenger status without ever beating a legitimate world-class fighter.

For Cazares, it was an opportunity to showcase his talent in front of the international media in town for the Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya blockbuster the following evening. But neither the media nor the crowd at the MGM Grand Ballroom saw anything resembling a championship-caliber match.

Cazares, 29, did the best possible thing under the circumstances: He took care of business in an expedient and professional manner, dropping the hapless Perez twice in the first round and then again in the second for a TKO victory at the 0:25 mark.

After snapping Perez' head back with a left jab early in the opening round, Cazares, 25-3-1 (19), delivered a right to the chin for the first knockdown. Perez, 108, Cartagena, Colombia, regained his feet inside of referee Joe Cortez' count, and Cazares, 108, Los Mochis, Mexico, went back to work. Another right soon spilled the 29-year-old Perez for a second count, and only the bell saved him from the ignominy of a first-round defeat.

The lanky, 5'6" champion wasted no time ending the mismatch, smashing Perez, 23-2-3 (16), to the floor a third time early in the second round with yet another right hand. This time, Cortez (USA) didn't even bother to count, waving the fight off as soon as the stricken boxer hit the canvas.

An interested ringside observer was undefeated Ivan "Iron Boy" Calderon, THE RING's number-one strawweight contender, who will be moving up three pounds in order to challenge Cazares in August. The crafty Puerto Rican defensive specialist figures to give the champ a much tougher argument and the fans a lot more for their money than did the overmatched Perez.

Television: **Telefutura**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(5-4-07)
Nigel Collins

PHOTO BY ROB DELORENZO/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Cazares celebrates his first defense of THE RING belt

Edwin Valero KO 8 Nobuhito Honmo

Tokyo, Japan: Japan-based Venezuelan kayo artist Valero, 130, advanced his perfect record to 22-0 (22)—though he failed to add to his incredible total of 19 first-round knockouts—against mandatory challenger Honmo, 129½, Japan, at Ariake Colosseum. Valero made his second defense of the WBA 130-pound belt by stalking Honmo, 29-5-2 (5), all night, opening four lacerations, and finally halting him at 1:54 of the eighth round.

The southpaw Valero failed to floor the defensive challenger, but kept throwing punches from all angles to make it a lopsided affair. On the official scorecards through seven rounds, Rafael Ramos (USA) had it 70-63, Guy Jutras (Canada) 70-64, and Philippe Verbeke (Belgium) 69-64. The referee was Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand).

The 25-year-old long-haired Venezuelan went for a quick stoppage, as usual, aggressively attacking the tight-guarded Japanese challenger from the outset. Honmo, five years his senior at 30, seemed determined to last through the initial round. The crowd praised the cautious Japanese fighter for having survived Valero's opening attack.

In round two, Valero opened a cut over the left eyebrow of Honmo, who desperately kept moving and trying to defend himself against Valero's busy combinations. The third saw Valero still aggressive with southpaw jabs and solid straight lefts, while Honmo occasionally threw countering left-right combos. Judge Verbeke generously gave this round to Honmo, probably swayed by the fact that the challenger was finally punching back.

Valero accelerated his awesome attack in the fourth, when he created the third laceration over the left eyebrow of the challenger. The titleholder soon opened the fourth gash, over

the right eye, making his foe a bloody mess. The referee had the cuts examined by ring physician Dr. Ohtsuki, who would have to climb up to the ring apron twice more later.

From the fifth round on, Valero shifted his focus to the midsection to stop the challenger's footwork. But Honmo desperately averted his combinations with the peek-a-boo guard, which he used to survive the sixth and seventh with his face covered in blood.

In the eighth, Valero pressed for the finish. Ref Prayadsab called Dr. Ohtsuki to check his cuts twice in the round, and the physician finally advised him to halt the proceedings due to impaired vision. Even if it hadn't been stopped at that point, Valero would have caught the bloodied and fading challenger to finish the affair sooner or later.

According to Valero's promoter, Akihiko Honda, he is hoping to stage his next defense in the United States, though he currently does not have a license to fight there due to a negative brain scan recorded several years ago.

Promoter: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions**

(5-3-07)

Joe Koizumi

PHOTO BY TOSHIMO KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kayo artist Valero wings a wild right at Honmo

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Floyd Mayweather

Floyd Mayweather's win over Oscar De La Hoya was not the greatest performance of his career. It wasn't as spectacular as his stoppage of Diego Corrales, or his wipeout of Arturo Gatti, or his first title victory over Genaro Hernandez. It was just a good, solid, workmanlike, intelligently fought win ... that happened to come over the most famous fighter of the era in the richest boxing match in history with the largest pay-per-view audience ever watching. You do that, and the sheer magnitude of it makes you Fighter of the Month, even if the in-ring performance was something short of extraordinary.

Mayweather, giving up four pounds officially and probably more like a dozen by the time of the fight, easily negated the size disadvantage with his advantages in speed and reflexes. He fought the fight he wanted to—popping in and out with one or two quick shots, using his exceptional defense to make De La Hoya miss most of his punches and gradually tire himself out, turning it up in the final third of the fight to secure the victory. The end result was Mayweather joining a pretty exclusive list of fighters—Felix Trinidad, Bernard Hopkins, and Shane Mosley—with wins over "The Golden Boy."

But the list of fighters with wins over Mayweather is even more exclusive. There's nobody on that list, and if Mayweather continues to fight with his brain as he did against De La Hoya, there may never be anybody on that list.

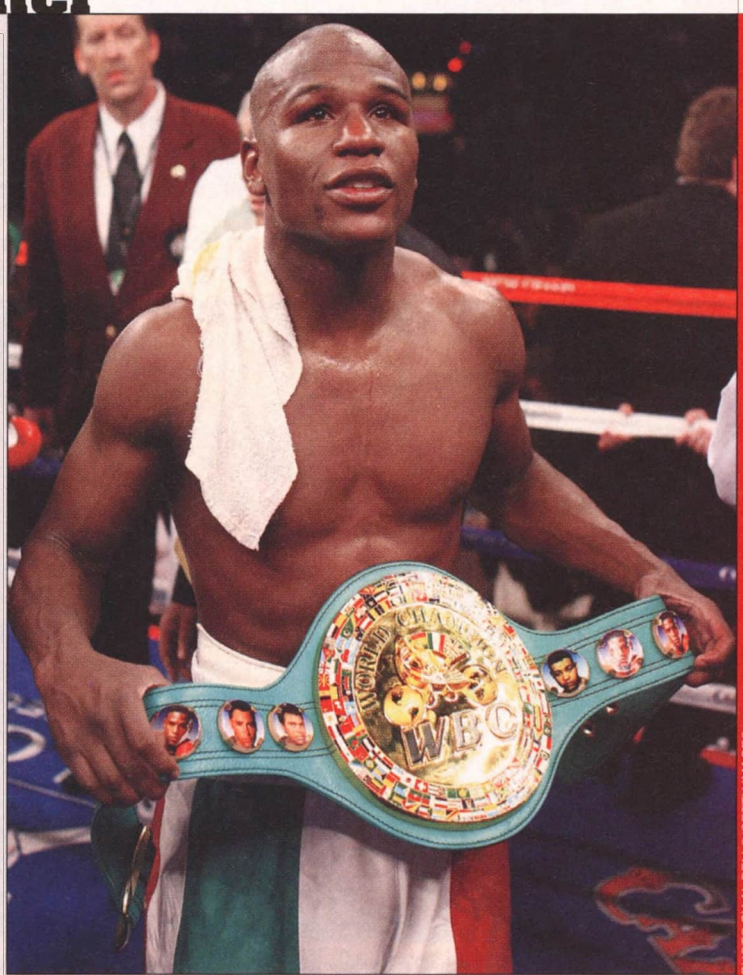

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hozumi Hasegawa W 12
Simphiwe Vetyeka

Tokyo, Japan: WBC bantam titlist Hasegawa, 118, made his fourth defense of the belt as he earned a unanimous but disappointing decision over previously unbeaten South African challenger Vetyeka, 117¾, over 12 rounds at Ariake Colosseum. Duane Ford (USA) and David Sutherland (USA) both scored it 116-112, and Victor Manuel Cervantes (Mexico) had it 115-113, all for Hasegawa, who had predicted a kayo win but had to settle for victory on the cards.

PHOTO BY TOSHIMO KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Vetyeka eats a left from Hasegawa

It was a very technical and psychological game between the fast counterpunchers. They probed each other in a lengthy feeling-out process, and Vetyeka, 26, studied the southpaw Hasegawa, also 26, but seldom threw solid punches in the first four rounds.

The South African began to throw sharp straight rights from the fifth on, while Hasegawa also landed southpaw lefts to the face with precision. They were respecting each other a little too much, prompting referee Guadalupe Garcia (Mexico) to tell them on several occasions to create more action.

The seventh round saw Vetyeka catch Hasegawa with accurate rights, shaking him up effectively. But the beltholder furiously retaliated with a barrage of punches at the end of the round. Vetyeka's trainer, Nick Durandt, kept urging him to go forward more, and in the eighth he scored with good rights to the shorter but busier Hasegawa. After that round, the open scoring system indicated all the tallies were identical, 77-75 for Hasegawa.

Hasegawa maintained the pressure on the upright counterpuncher to win the ninth and 11th, while Vetyeka was seemingly in command in round 10. The 12th round was quite different from the previous sessions, as Hasegawa furiously turned loose to land a fusillade of punches, sometimes pinning the South African to the ropes. Had Hasegawa started this attack earlier, he might have been able to score a knockdown. But Vetyeka, 16-1 (9), was excellent in terms of defensive skills and counterpunching, so Hasegawa, 22-2 (7), had to fight somewhat carefully. Even though the fight was close, there probably won't be much demand for a rematch.

Promoter: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions**

(5-3-07)

Joe Koizumi

Alexander Munoz W 12
Nobuo Nashiro

Tokyo, Japan: Former titleholder Munoz, 114¾, recaptured the WBA 115-pound belt as he maintained the pressure, despite sometimes absorbing roundhouse shots, and pounded out a unanimous decision over previously unbeaten Japanese titlist Nashiro, 115, over 12 heats. Munoz had lost the title to Martin Castillo in December 2004, and Nashiro took the belt from Castillo in July '06. Logic dictated that Nashiro should be able to best Munoz, but as the old saying goes, styles make fights, and the Venezuelan had the right style to get his belt back at Ariake Colosseum.

The shorter Nashiro, 25, followed the wrong fight plan, as he wasn't as aggressive as expected, throwing only one punch at a time. Munoz, 28, kept throwing combinations regardless of precision and piled up points because of his continual aggression.

Munoz was in command in the first two rounds against the peek-a-boo stylist. Nashiro took the third and sixth with solid shots, mostly left hooks that slowed down the more experienced challenger.

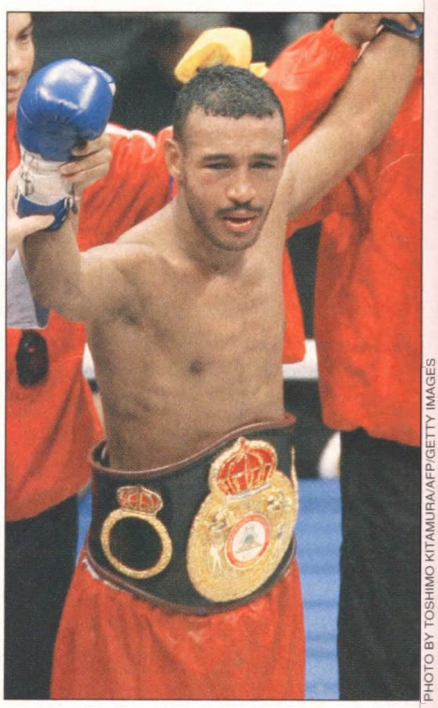

PHOTO BY TOSHIMO KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Munoz regains the WBA 115-pound belt

But Munoz, 30-2 (27), kept his engine hot enough to continue pumping out versatile combinations. Nashiro, 9-1 (5), showed his tight defense that averted most of Munoz' long shots, but failed to show his usual pugnacious energy. The Venezuelan puncher dominated the last two rounds by a clear-cut margin to confirm his victory.

Guy Jutras (Canada) scored it 117-112, Raul Caiz (USA) saw it 117-111, and Philippe Verbeke (Belgium) had it 118-109, all for Munoz. The third man was Rafael Ramos (USA).

Promoter: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions**

(5-3-07)

Joe Koizumi

Prawet Singwangcha D 12 Jose Cotto

Salinas, Puerto Rico: There's often talk in boxing of how uneven the playing field can be for visiting fighters traveling to Thailand, but at the Coliseo Angel Espada, Thai fighter Prawet found that the playing fields can be uneven in Puerto Rico as well. Prawet appeared to do enough to edge out Cotto, Caguas, Puerto Rico, on his home turf, but two of the judges—including the one from Puerto Rico—called it a draw, meaning the WBA lightweight title remains vacant.

When Juan Diaz—incidentally, the only man to defeat Cotto—unified two alphabet belts against Acelino Freitas in April, he became the so-called "super champion," opening up a spot for a non-"super" titleholder from whom the Venezuela-based alphabet organization could extract sanctioning fees. The top contenders were a pair of fighters not even ranked by THE RING at 135 pounds, and neither one really impressed enough to earn a top-10 ranking in this bout. Still, it was the visitor who seemed to do more.

THE RING scored the first three rounds for Cotto, 135, though only the second was clear-cut, with the older brother of welterweight titlist Miguel landing several big lefts and rights, most notably a right hand to the ear of a bent-over Prawet, 135, Bangkok, Thailand, who staggered but kept his feet. Prawet, 30, started to take over in the fourth, landing a flush right uppercut and pinning Cotto, 29, on the ropes. By the fifth, Cotto was mostly just moving and dancing, stopping all too frequently along the ropes and punching all too infrequently. The right uppercut scored again for the Thailander in the sixth, and in the seventh round of a previously jab-less fight, southpaw Prawet starting using his lead right to edge a dull round.

Having fallen behind, Cotto started to show signs of life late in round eight and again in round nine, when his aggression (much of it ineffective) led the crowd to begin "Cot-to! Cot-to!" chants. A seemingly tiring Prawet was backing up and giving ground, and Cotto was taking advantage.

But the fight took a most bizarre twist during the rest period prior to the 10th round. Cotto refused to sit on his stool and paced the ring angrily, then got into a shoving match with his uncle and cornerman Evangelista Cotto, which led brother Miguel to jump up on the ring apron and restrain Jose. For the final two between-rounds breaks, Evangelista sat at ringside and didn't work the corner.

But Cotto didn't use his anger as fuel. Instead, he sleepwalked through rounds 10 and 11, letting the more focused Prawet, 30-2-2 (18), pile up some points. And neither fighter emptied the proverbial guns in the 12th, though Cotto, 28-1-1 (20), may have taken the round with a notable left hook.

Even after giving Cotto the flip-a-coin 12th, THE RING had Prawet on top 115-113, and Tom Miller (USA) had the foreigner ahead too, 117-111. But Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) and Guy Jutras (Canada) both saw it 114-114, resulting in a majority draw.

The referee was Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico).

Television: **Telefutura**

Promoter: **Top Rank**

(5-11-07)

Rey Bautista W 12 Sergio Medina

Las Vegas, Nevada: In what turned out to be the best action fight of the Mayweather-De La Hoya weekend, the previously undefeated pair of Bautista and Medina rewarded early arrivers at the MGM Grand Garden Arena with a spirited, seesaw battle.

Medina, Salta, Argentina, displayed savvy boxing skills in the opening round, covering up well when the aggressive Bautista unloaded, and then coming off the ropes with clean, crisp punches of his own. There were several brisk exchanges during the second, but Bautista, 122, was the

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Bautista on the attack against Medina in battle of undefeated junior feathers

busier of the two in the third, though he did receive a warning from referee Robert Byrd (USA) for punching low.

Bautista, Candijay, Philippines, landed a solid left hook in the fourth, and was enjoying another good session in the fifth when Byrd interrupted the flow of action and deducted a point from the Filipino for what appeared to be a borderline bodyshot.

"Boom Boom" got the point back in the sixth when he floored Medina, 122, with a hybrid left hook/uppercut. Medina, however, didn't seem unduly hurt and jumped up quickly and fought back. By the end of the round, Bautista was leaking blood from a cut over the left eye.

In the seventh, Byrd may very well have cost Medina his best chance of victory by giving Bautista a questionable standing eight-count. The Argentinean had staggered Bautista with a left hook and then sent him reeling into the ropes with a follow-up barrage. The Filipino was visibly hurt and looked ready to go, but Byrd swooped in, sent Medina to a neutral corner, and began to count. The ref must have thought that Bautista would have gone down if the ropes had not held him up, because there was no standing-eight in effect in the bout. Those few precious seconds gave Bautista a chance to recover sufficiently to survive until the bell.

The 25-year-old Medina burst out of his corner at the start of the eighth, determined to finish the job, and even though he outpunched Bautista and won the round on all three official scorecards, Boom Boom was fully recovered and punching back by the end of the round. Medina's best opportunity to win had slipped away, and from then on he began to fade.

Bautista controlled the ninth and then cornered Medina in the 10th, banging home hurtful-looking bodyshots and thumping rights to the head. Medina, 28-1 (16), managed to stay off the ropes in the 11th and was holding his own when a flush right dropped him in his tracks. He bravely beat the count and backpedaled his way to the bell. Bautista, 20, completed his sweep of the final four rounds in the 12th to win a unanimous decision and raise his record to 23-0 (18).

Both Paul Smith (USA) and C.J. Ross (USA) scored it 115-109, while Dave Moretti (USA) saw it 116-108. THE RING had it a tad closer at 115-110, also for Bautista.

Many in Filipino boxing circles consider Bautista the heir apparent to Manny Pacquiao, and while that might be an overly optimistic point of view, his performance was good enough for him to debut at the number-six spot in THE RING's 122-pound ratings.

"Medina was a very tough fighter and a very good opponent, but he hit me a lot with his head," said Bautista, who hopes to fight Daniel Ponce De Leon next.

"I believe he won the decision, but I thought it was closer than that," said Medina, who slipped to number seven in THE RING ratings, but showed enough skills and grit to successfully bounce back from his first pro defeat.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(5-5-07)
Nigel Collins

Rocky Juarez W 12 Jose Hernandez

Las Vegas, Nevada: Juarez returned to the featherweight division for the first time since losing to Humberto Soto in August 2005, and won a unanimous decision over Hernandez, who was coming off an upset kayo of hot prospect Jason Litzau. It was a typically uneven performance by Juarez, who just can't seem to get his offense working on a consistent basis.

Following a pedestrian opening round, Juarez, 125½, Houston, Texas, uncorked a straight right to the chin in the second that put Hernandez, 125½, on the floor. He was up inside of American referee Tony Weeks' count, and after absorbing a few more clean shots from his tormentor, appeared fully recovered by the time the round-ending bell rang.

Instead of jumping on Hernandez in an attempt to follow up on his success in the previous round, Juarez grew strangely passive in the third and was outworked by his marginally busier adversary in the fourth, who peppered him with modest blows. Juarez remained stuck in press-but-don't-punch mode over the next five rounds, two of which went to the 31-year-old Hernandez on THE RING scorecard.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Juarez rocks Hernandez with a right

Juarez, 27-3 (19), woke up again in the 10th, punishing Hernandez with a series of heavy lefts and rights. He had another good sequence midway into the 11th before shutting it down for the night. And by the start of the final round, Juarez, 27, was backing up, which allowed his earnest rival to close the gap by simply trying harder over the final three minutes.

Judges Burt Clements and Adalaide Byrd gave it to Juarez by scores of 116-111 and 117-110, respectively, while Glenn Trowbridge's 115-112 tally, also for Juarez, was more indicative of what transpired inside of the ring. THE RING had Juarez up by a 116-113 margin.

"It was a very, very tough fight," admitted Juarez. "I dropped him, but I couldn't finish because he was still dangerous. I feel great [back at featherweight]; it's my natural weight."

Hernandez, a Mexican national now living in Round Lake, Illinois, dropped to 22-4 (14).

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(5-5-07)
Nigel Collins

Ivan Calderon W 12 Ronald Barrera

Barranquilla, Colombia: The typical Calderon fight is two things: one-sided and boring. This bout at Coliseo Universidad del Norte, "Iron Boy's" 11th (and probably last) defense of the WBO minimumweight title, was not the typical Calderon fight; it was extremely close, and highly entertaining. Fighting in the challenger's hometown, Calderon escaped with a split decision win to keep his record perfect at 28-0 (6), while Barrera, engaging in his second title challenge, fell to 20-3-1 (12).

Not unlike the only other particularly close fights of the longtime beltholder's career, his 2005 defense against Gerardo Verde, Calderon, 104¼, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, swept the early rounds, but faded late when his lack of power made it difficult to hold Barrera, 103, off. Had the intense fight been scheduled for 15 rounds, the result may have been very different, as Barrera, 22, had much more left in the tank than did his 32-year-old counterpart.

But Calderon put enough early rounds in the bank to come out victorious. Judges Hector Afu (Panama) and Ignacio Robles (Panama) both saw it 115-113 for Iron Boy, while Uriel Aguilera (Colombia) went 115-113 the other way. The referee was Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico).

While a rematch would appear logical, Calderon is instead headed for an even more attractive fight: an August challenge of 108-pound world champion Hugo Cazares. Presumably, Calderon will vacate his 105-pound title in order to get the fight.

Promoters: **Cuadrilatero, Top Rank**
(4-28-07)

Felix Sturm W 12 Javier Castillejo

Oberhausen, Germany: Pride and ego proved to be Sturm's undoing when he defended the WBA middleweight title against Castillejo, 158¼, Madrid, Spain, in July 2006. Floored in the second round, he recovered well and amassed a substantial points lead before getting caught again in the 10th round and stopped, succumbing to the inside engagement that gave Castillejo his only chance. The second time around, Sturm, 159½, Hamburg, Germany, remained cleverly dispassionate, boxing his way to a unanimous decision and a victory that secured for him again the WBA belt at the Konig-Pilsener Arena.

"I wanted to show that I can fight," Sturm, 27-2 (12), had declared in the aftermath of his second defeat, his first being the controversial loss to Oscar De La Hoya in June 2004. But in the Castillejo rematch, he utilized his natural advantages for the whole of the fight, keeping his defense tight in the face of the Spaniard's pressure and pumping an accurate left jab into his face to deter his onrushes. Castillejo did not enjoy the sustained success inside that he required to pull off a repeat victory and, even though he had periods in which his strength prevailed, the boxing skills of the challenger triumphed ultimately. Even the crowd was pleased by Sturm's performance, having previously become indifferent to his style, which had led to him showing more aggression—and an Achilles' heel—in the first meeting with Castillejo.

PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Strum (right) en route to revenge victory over Castillejo

From the opening round, Sturm's jab was his favored weapon, and he used it effectively to keep Castillejo at bay and to win points. Castillejo, 61-7 (41), was unable to get inside where he could inflict damage, but in the second and third rounds, when Sturm neglected his jab, the Spanish titleholder moved in close and seized the initiative. Wisely, Sturm chose not to trade, but covered up instead, and by round four he was asserting himself again with a strong left lead. With his right hand, however, he betrayed a reluctance to throw and possibly leave himself open.

Sturm, 28, showed his vulnerabilities over the next two rounds when Castillejo's pressure threatened to take away his jab as an effective offensive punch. Largely, he operated on the run, and it was only in the seventh round that he hit back significantly again with a right uppercut and a left hook, which hurt the 39-year-old Spaniard, and followed up with a succession of jabs that established a comfortable distance once more for the German. He was able to time his punches better in the eighth round and stun Castillejo again in the ninth with a strong right to the jaw. His rhythm had become more fluid, and Castillejo's frustration was beginning to show.

He tried to pin Sturm on the ropes in the 10th with a body attack, but accurate counters to the head prevented him from steaming in more forcefully, and over the final two rounds, the challenger got on his bike and refused to be pinned down. The jab again provided the decisive blows. John Coyle (England) and Cesar Ramos (Mexico) both scored 116-112 for Sturm, while Erkki Meronen (Finland) saw it closer at 115-114. THE RING scored for Sturm 115-113, with his boxing just getting the better of Castillejo's aggression.

"Being stopped by Castillejo in our first contest has made me a stronger fighter," Sturm insisted. "I think I showed that I learned from my mistake. I intend to hold this belt for a long time."

Promoter: **Universum**
(4-28-07)
Brian Doogan

Stipe Drews W 12 Silvio Branco

Oberhausen, Germany: Four years before, with the European light heavyweight title at stake, Drews won a unanimous decision over Branco before losing a WBC elimination bout to Australia's Paul Briggs. He never got near another title shot. But having regained the European belt in 2006, he was granted a second crack at Branco with the WBA title at stake after the Italian had beaten Manny Siaca for the interim belt and Fabrice Tiozzo, the previous titleholder, retired. Drews fully exploited his opportunity at the Konig-Pilsener Arena.

The 6'5" Croatian southpaw made the most of his five-inch reach advantage to keep Branco at arm's length for the majority of the bout. His biggest crisis came in the eighth round when the Italian cracked him with a right hook and a subsequent uppercut, but, although he went down, American referee Steve Smoger ruled it a slip because Branco had stepped on his foot.

"I outboxed Silvio, just as I did in our first fight, and I felt confident all night," said the 33-year-old. "There was no stage where he had me really hurt and I knew I was ahead on points. But he gave me a good fight."

Drews, 174¼, Pula, Croatia, took charge in the early rounds with his jab, and Branco, 174¼, Civitavecchia, Italy, was unable to take the play away. It was round four before the 40-year-old veteran was able to build up enough momentum to go after the Croat, and Drews did appear uncomfortable, but he re-established his ascendancy in the fifth with his jab and Branco's limitations were being demonstrated emphatically.

But the Italian titleholder stuck with it and struck with a left hook to Drews' jaw in the sixth that clearly registered. Branco continued to come on in the seventh, and in the eighth he penetrated the challenger's guard with a right hook that forced him into his corner. Drews responded with a solid one-two combination and pushed

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GWTTY IMAGES

Drews pops Branco in the nose with a left

Branco back across the ring, but the Italian fired back and thought he had scored a knockdown when he landed an uppercut and Drews touched down. But their feet had become entangled and the referee correctly ruled that it was not a knockdown, though Branco was still encouraged by the shift in momentum.

Then Drews, 32-1 (13), made the decisive move to return to boxing at a distance over the final three rounds. Branco, 55-9-2 (34), was reduced to a futile chase until the final bell intervened. Jean-Louis Legland (France) scored 116-113, Cesar Ramos (Mexico) 116-112, and Takeshi Shimakawa (Japan) 115-113, all for Drews. THE RING also scored 116-112 for the Croatian.

Promoter: **Universum**
(4-28-07)
Brian Doogan

Mzonke Fana W 12 Malcolm Klassen

Khayelitsha, South Africa: Sam Langford never got to call himself "world champion." Ditto for Charley Burley, Harry Wills, and Jerry Quarry. But Klassen did get to coming into this fight, and Fana does now, thanks to the IBF stripping its junior lightweight title from Marco Antonio Barrera in 2005, and the belt being passed around from one fringe contender to another ever since. Is Fana, who was obliterated by Barrera in two rounds two years prior to this fight, the worst fighter ever to call himself a "world champion"? Well, he beat Klassen, so maybe Klassen deserves that designation. One way or another, they're two of the least worthy titlists in boxing history, and they make a darned fine argument for ignoring everything the alphabet groups ever do.

Klassen, 129¾, Toekumsrus, South Africa, was making his first defense of the belt he won via split decision over Gary St. Clair in November '06, and got off to a decent start. But Fana, 129½, Cape Town, South Africa, came on in the later rounds. With the outcome hanging in the balance entering the 12th and final round, Fana, 26-3 (9), stunned Klassen, 19-4-2 (10), with a series of punches, securing the split decision victory at the Oliver Tambo Sport Centre. Judge Deon Dwarte (South Africa) had it 116-112 and Alfred Buqwana (South Africa) 116-113, both for Fana, while Lulama Mtya (South Africa) saw the fight 115-114 for Klassen.

The referee was Lindsay Paige (USA).

Promoter: **Branco Sports Productions**
(4-20-07)

PHOTO BY DAN CREIGHTON
Holt keeps Arnaoutis at bay with a long left

Kendall Holt W 12 Mike Arnaoutis

Atlantic City, New Jersey: On paper, the junior welterweight matchup between Holt, 139¼, Paterson, New Jersey, and Arnaoutis, 140, Atlantic City, New Jersey, via Athens, Greece, looked enticing. The soldout crowd at Bally's Grand Ballroom came expecting fireworks from the slick, hard-hitting Holt, 25, and explosive southpaw Arnaoutis, 27.

Instead, they got a dud. Holt did the least amount necessary to record a unanimous and somewhat easy decision over Arnaoutis, who seemed reluctant to let his hands go throughout all 12 rounds.

Neither fighter did much of anything in the opening round. Holt did close to nothing, which was enough to win the round because Arnaoutis did *absolutely* nothing. And so it seemed to go, round after round. "Mighty Mike" was way too cautious, unwilling to sit down on any of his punches.

In the third, Holt began opening up. He landed a three-punch combination that Arnaoutis could not answer. By the fifth, a firm pattern had taken hold of the fight: Holt controlling the sway of the fight with his jab, dodging Mighty Mike's plodding rebuttals, and occasionally throwing a left hook to keep Arnaoutis at a safe distance. For a brief spell in the fifth, Arnaoutis picked up the pace, nailing Holt with a few shots, but the Greek felt the sting of a Holt counter right that caught him on the chin.

Feeling the fight was firmly in his grasp, Holt got a little sloppy in the sixth, keeping his hands down, almost begging Arnaoutis to engage him. Still, Arnaoutis did nothing.

By the 10th round, the effects of Holt's jab began to show on Arnaoutis, who started to swell around both eyes. Later in the 10th, Holt doubled Mighty Mike over with a hard right to his stomach.

Considerably ahead on all scorecards, Holt still looked to finish Arnaoutis in the 12th. A right counter to the chin dropped Arnaoutis, 17-2-2 (9), at around the two-minute mark of the round. The only knockdown of the fight put an exclamation point on an otherwise drab victory for Holt, 22-1 (12).

Judge Steve Weisfeld (USA) scored it 117-110, while both George Hill (USA) and John Stewart (USA) tallied 118-109, as did THE RING. Benji Esteves (USA) was the referee.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Star Boxing**
(4-20-07)
Joe Santoliquito

Ricardo Torres W 12 Arturo Morua

Barranquilla, Colombia: Just three months after being TKO'd by Junior Witter in a bid for the WBC 140-pound belt, journeyman Morua was granted another title opportunity at Coliseo Universidad del Norte, but his challenge of WBO strapholder Torres didn't go much better. Torres, the hard-hitting Colombian who nearly upset Miguel Cotto in 2005 and who edged Mike Arnaoutis for the vacant WBO light welterweight title in November '06, dominated from the outset, showing good form against his outclassed challenger despite coming up short in his pursuit of a knockout.

"Mochuelo" Torres, 139½, 27, tasted canvas in both the Cotto fight and the Arnaoutis fight, and has forced many opponents to taste it, but there were no knockdowns in this bout. Morua, 139¼, Guadalajara, Mexico, 29, was determined to last the distance if not to win, and though it looked in the 12th round as if Torres might get him, the slugger could never quite put the right punches together.

Judge Ignacio Robles (Panama) had it a clean sweep at 120-108, Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia) saw it 120-109, and Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) scored it 118-110, all for Torres, 31-1 (27). Morua fell to 7-8 in his last 15 and 24-9-1 (8) overall. The referee was Uriel Aguilera (Colombia).

Torres is next headed for a mandatory defense against Kendall Holt.

Promoters: **Cuadrilatero, Top Rank**
(4-28-07)

Darling Jimenez KO 3 Mike Anchondo

Washington, D.C.: The Washington Nationals baseball team was hosting the New York Mets right across the street at the same time this D.C. Armory fight card was taking place. The hometown Nats probably wish they had the power of Jimenez' gloves in their bats, as the New Yorker stretched Anchondo in three action-heavy rounds that were worth the price of admission for the small gathering of fans.

From the outset, Anchondo, 135, La Puente, California, appeared to be the slower of the two, so he sought to neutralize the superior hand speed of Jimenez, 133½, Bronx, New York, via the Dominican Republic, by timing him. The 25-year-old Californian applied pressure on Jimenez, but his shots were too wide, allowing the 27-year-old New Yorker to answer inside with quicker, shorter combinations, along with using stiff left jabs from outside.

Early in the second stanza, Jimenez, 23-2-2 (14), scored with a three-punch flurry upstairs. Then, with about two minutes remaining, he hurt the former WBO lightweight titleholder with a right to the head followed by a left hook to the chin, sending Anchondo, 27-2 (19), into retreat. Jimenez caught up to him at the ropes, then buckled his foe's knees with another left-right combo; Anchondo fell face first, then rose from his hands and knees at the count of five. Still looking worse for wear, the West Coaster hung on valiantly against his hard-charging attacker, then caught a break when timekeeper Paul McGarvey miscounted, ringing the bell to end the round after only two minutes had elapsed.

As it turned out, the shortened round was merely a reprieve. Jimenez came out for the third in a southpaw stance, and the two went to war as Anchondo vowed to go out on his shield. But the Dominican's blows had more snap, crackle, and pop. Two sizzling lefts sent Anchondo back to the cords, and a three-punch flurry punctuated by two chopping rights had him in distress. With just over a minute remaining, Jimenez deflated Anchondo with a solid left to the body, then followed up with a crushing left hook to the jaw that put Anchondo down and literally out, on his face in a neutral corner. Referee Joe Cooper (USA) did not bother finishing the count. The official time of the stoppage was 2:05 of the third.

"I knew he was out as soon as I hit him," said Jimenez afterward. "My left hook is my power shot and I knew I was gonna catch him. I kept throwing rights to set him up for the left hand."

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **C.L.I.P. and Ron Remus Productions**
(4-27-07)
Mike Greenhill

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Jimenez hooks Anchondo into third-round defeat

David Haye KO 1 Tomasz Bonin

London, England: Cruiserweight contender Haye placed an enticing marker in the heavyweight division by blowing away Poland's Bonin in one round at the Arena in Wembley.

This was a water-testing exercise while Haye waited for his mandatory shot at Jean-Marc Mormeck's 200-pound title. The filler he really wanted

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Haye stops Bonin in the opening round of his spectacular heavyweight debut

was British rival Enzo Macarinelli, but Haye was not prepared to sign his future over to Frank Warren and so, as happens all too often in British boxing, the showdown fell through.

The crowd-pleasing Londoner, who candidly admits to weight problems, instructed his own promoter, Frank Maloney, to find him a "WBC top-15 heavyweight." The solution came in the form of 12th-rated Bonin, who'd won 11 straight since a controversial ninth-round loss to Audley Harrison three years ago (a premature stoppage after an even bout).

At 231 pounds, Bonin was in good shape, and he seemed to have a hard chin, so it looked like the 217-pound Haye was in for a long night. Given past question marks about Haye's chin and stamina, this made for an intriguing contest.

Instead, it was all over within 105 seconds. Haye's first punch was a jab that jerked the visitor's head back. After a few bodyshots, he fired a left-right combination, the right landing flush on the side of the jaw, and the 33-year-old Pole went down.

The Englishman then landed a three-punch volley, ending with a heavy right hook, and Bonin fell again. He rose quickly, but looked severely shaken. This time Haye, 26, jumped on the bigger man, battering him to the canvas, at which point referee Ian John Lewis (England) stepped in.

The win takes Haye's record to 19-1 (18), his only loss coming against Carl Thompson in 2004, when he ran out of steam and was stopped in five—a harsh lesson that taught him to take boxing seriously, he says. He hoped for a learning fight against Bonin, 37-2 (20), but his speed, accuracy, and increased power at heavyweight prevented that.

"I was really looking to be testing out my defense," he said, "but unfortunately, I let the right hand go and you could see the difference. The power is twice as much at heavyweight. When I fight again at cruiserweight, I won't be effective as tonight, but even at 70 percent, I still think that's good enough to win a world title against Mormeck. I want the undisputed cruiserweight title. It would be mad to not make that fight and not knock him out."

(4-28-07)

Gavin Evans

Chris Byrd KO 7 Paul Marinaccio

New Providence, Bahamas: Four days shy of a full year's inactivity, former heavyweight beltholder Byrd returned to action at Clifford Park and won just the sort of fight he needed, the sort of fight he hadn't had in about five years—an easy one. Against unknown 40-year-old opponent Marinaccio, Byrd shook off some of the rust and scored his first stoppage win since a third-round triumph over journeyman Jeff Pegues in June 2002.

Marinaccio, whose attractive 22-2-2 (9) record coming in featured a seventh-round TKO loss to Timor Ibragimov in his only other step up against a world-class foe, basically played the role of sparring partner for Byrd, trying his best but terribly outclassed and unable to land any punches of consequence. Byrd, 214, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Flint, Michigan, strayed from his typical counterpunching approach by pressing forward and making the fight, realizing he could win this battle of southpaws regardless of which game plan he used. Jabs, right hooks, and left crosses all found a home on the face of Marinaccio, 229½, Buffalo, New York, as Byrd, 36, piled up the points.

In the fourth, Byrd, not regarded as much of a puncher, pinned the 6'5" Marinaccio along the ropes and rocked him with right-left combinations. Marinaccio lost his mouthpiece twice in the round, and after the second time, referee Jose H. Rivera (Puerto Rico) warned him that a point deduction was coming if it happened again.

Byrd, 40-3-1 (21), opened up even more in the fifth, scoring with six-punch combinations and eight-punch combinations, while Marinaccio could do little more than cover up and try to retreat out of range. In round six, Byrd wobbled "The Italian Hitman" with a left cross and then a right hook, both landing squarely on the chin, and when the former Olympian shifted his attack to the body late in the round, he convinced Marinaccio of the futility of fighting on. When the bell rang for the start of the seventh, Marinaccio remained on his stool, and the fight was officially called off at 0:01 of the round.

Television: **ESPN2**

Promoter: **Titan Entertainment**

(4-18-07)■

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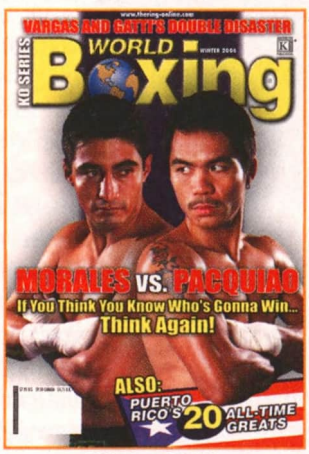

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New Faces

(Continued from Page 28)

Ricardo Williams Jr. In the immediate aftermath of that defeat, Olusegun packed his gym bag and trudged out into the Sydney night. He returned to the Olympic village alone, just another hopeful with shattered dreams. But it wasn't just his personal dream that shattered into a million little pieces.

"I disappointed myself, disappointed my family, disappointed Nigeria, and disappointed Africa," Olusegun said.

The disillusionment was only compounded by what he felt was an unfair shake. In what most characterize as a closely fought contest, the Williams bout was halted in the fourth round because Olusegun was hopelessly behind on the scorecards. Mention the disparity of the scores, and he just shakes his head and laughs.

"Those watching it live knew that the scorecards didn't match the fight," said Olusegun.

The stoppage was controversial enough that the Nigerian Olympic Committee protested the result. It was to no avail. Olusegun was sent home without a medal, while Williams, one of four American medalists from the Sydney games, received a huge signing bonus from promoter Lou DiBella.

Despite returning from the Olympics as a self-proclaimed failure, Olusegun continued to box because, well, that's what he does. In his first three years as a professional, he racked up 13 wins against nondescript opposition. The precocious Olusegun finally gained a modicum of recognition in September 2004, when he received a last-minute call to fight popular Welsh brawler Bradley Pryce on national television.

"I didn't even know I was going to be on TV until the day of the fight," Olusegun said.

Olusegun's manager, former British heavyweight champion James Oyebola, recalled the popular sentiment leading up to the contest.

"He was not supposed to win that fight," he said.

But instead, Olusegun obliterated the Welshman. He threw punches in bunches, used deft head movement to

offset Pryce's attack, and with each passing round, the mystery man from Nigeria asserted his dominance. By the time the fourth came, Pryce was in a bad way. A barrage of punches punctuated by a right hand knocked Pryce down. A follow-up combination finished him for good.

"Keep your eyes out for Olusegun," Sky Sports commentator Adam Smith said after the Pryce knockout.

Armed with a high-profile regional victory, you would expect the doors of opportunity to fly open.

"That's what you would think," Oyebola said.

But the doors remained shut. Even after signing with promoter Frank Maloney, Olusegun has not been able to garner a big payday. In knocking out current British Commonwealth welterweight champion and former Olympian Ali Nuumbembe on a Sky Sports broadcast last June, Olusegun established himself as a 147-pound force. But being recognized as a fighter to watch and getting people to watch your fights are two entirely different stories.

"After the Nuumbembe fight, I said, 'Okay, now people have seen how good I am and things are going to change.' Nothing changed."

Perhaps he is simply too formidable for his own good? As a slippery southpaw with legitimate two-fisted power, it's not too surprising that rival promoters are not exactly eager to risk pitting him against their own meal tickets.

Olusegun's two subsequent fights since the Nuumbembe bout have been against the same type of stay-busy opposition that has characterized most of his career. Even so, Olusegun and Oyebola have made one thing clear: They are tired of sparring sessions masquerading as professional fights.

They are ready for the big time—now.

When discussing the future, Olusegun exudes a gunslinger's confidence. Name any of the top 140-pounders, from RING magazine champion Ricky Hatton to Souleymane M'Baye and Junior Witter, and he thinks he can take them all. You look as his eyes widen and his voice rises. He is dead serious. Oyebola nods his head in agreement.

"The top fighters can give me a date tomorrow morning," Olusegun said. "I'll be ready. I'm ready to fight them any day, even in their bedroom. In fact, his girlfriend or his wife can be the judge. I wouldn't mind."

Olusegun's anger boils over at times, belying his personable demeanor and megawatt smile. The mere mention of titleholder Witter passing him over for a title shot in favor of a journeyman like Arturo Morua sends him into a tizzy.

"I just want to prove I'm better than he is," he says, eyes widening. "What happened to my dignity?"

To Oyebola and Mensah, it is simple: Their protégé is a high-risk, low-reward fighter. Maybe Olusegun's relatively low profile is not enticing enough, but boxing is littered with examples of unknown pugilists seizing their shot at glory. Ghanaian legend Azumah Nelson was a virtually unknown 13-0 prospect before his gallant losing effort to Mexican immortal Salvador Sanchez launched him into the big time. Like Nelson, Olusegun might have to wait for a fearless champion willing to accept his challenge.

"You have to give the public what they want to see," Oyebola said. "The public wants to see good, competitive fights. That's what we are here for."

Until that time, until that competitive fight can me made, Olusegun and his team can only dream of what the future may hold. In the meantime, he will continue to trudge to the gym, just another talented kid from Nigeria looking to hit it big. For now, it's about patience, about honoring the memory of his father, of those folks back home whom he disappointed nearly seven years ago.

When asked just how far he can go, Olusegun smiles. He looks over at Oyebola, who smiles right back. They know the answer to this question. It is the question Ajose Olusegun has been waiting to answer.

"The sky is not the limit ... it's the starting point." ■

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6323/05-06

November 1933

COVER STORY: "A Pen Picture Of Barney Ross" by *New York Sun* sportswriter Wilbur Wood was written shortly after Ross' second victory over Tony Canzoneri in which he defended the lightweight and junior welterweight titles he'd won from Canzoneri earlier in the year.

Wood begins by admitting that his first impression of Ross ("a flashy kid, with lots of polish and class on the surface and probably not nearly so much underneath") was "wrong, very wrong." By the time he wrote this piece, Wood realized that Ross was a "fine character who is a credit to the boxing game, a boy his mother may well be proud of."

The bulk of the article consists of numerous quotes from Ross, which was unusual for those days, when most writers tended to quote mainly managers and promoters.

"My ambition is to remain lightweight champion throughout my career, giving every deserving challenger a chance," said Ross, "and then to retire, as Benny Leonard did, as undefeated champion."

Ross came close, but didn't quite live up to his lofty goal. He fought 32 more times before hanging up his gloves in 1938, going 28-2-1 with 1 no-decision during that stretch. He moved up to welterweight in '34, winning, losing, and regaining the 147-pound title in a trio of memorable bouts with Jimmy McLarnin, and was still welterweight champ going into his final fight, a 15-round decision defeat to Henry Armstrong.

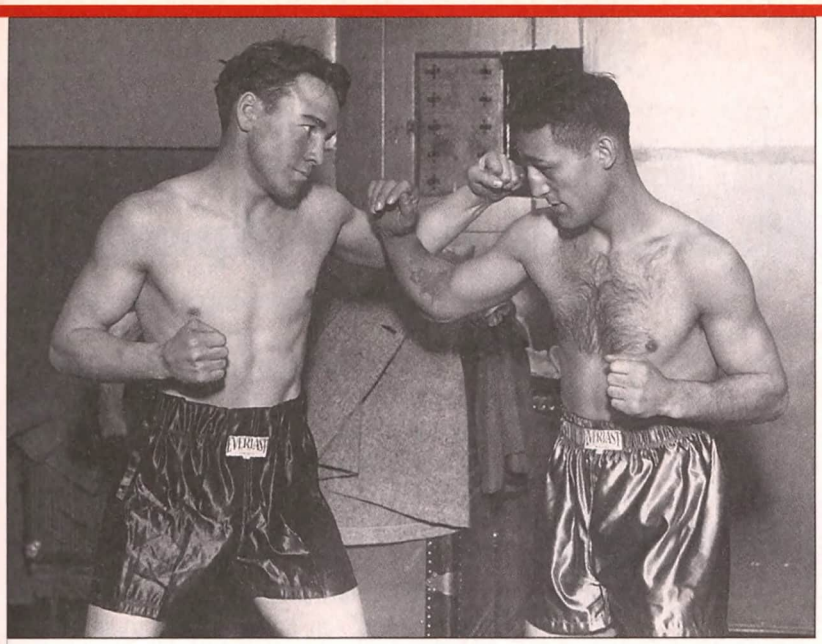
World Champions

(for period ended September 23, 1933)
Heavyweight: Primo Carnera
Light Heavyweight: Maxie Rosenbloom
Middleweight: Marcel Thil
Welterweight: Jimmy McLarnin
Lightweight: Barnet Ross
Featherweight: Kid Chocolate
Bantamweight: Al Brown
Flyweight: vacant

"Old-Timers Excelled" by Skippy Joyce features the recollections of 77-year-old Harry Gilmore, a former bare-knuckle lightweight who was, in 1933, running a gym in California. Not surprisingly, Gilmore didn't have too many positive things to say about contemporary fighters.

Gilmore reminisces about the bare-knuckle era

"The more I see of our modern glove bangers, the more convinced I am that few of them would be posing as fight stars had they lived back in the strenuous days of a couple of generations ago ... There were none of the high-class clubs then, the blaze of electric lights, the big soft gloves, and the freedom from police interference—all the thousands and one things that go to make the fistic game easier for the boxers of 1933."



Both McLarnin and Petrolle were "explosive" punchers

"The Lethal Wallop" by Clarence Gillespie discusses why some boxers have a knockout punch and others don't. According to Gillespie it all came down to one thing: "In my opinion, the only way to describe the quality that makes a single punch a lethal one, is its explosiveness."

Old-timers Sam Langford and Harry Wills were cited as examples of fighters who possessed the "explosive" quality necessary to score a one-punch kayo. Among active fighters, Gillespie lists Jimmy McLarnin, Billy Petrolle, Lou Brouillard, and Tony Canzoneri as "those who come within the class of devastating punchers and rank as aces."

"Giants Not So Hot" by Jack Kofoed was inspired by the fact that the heavyweight title was held by 6'5¾", 260-pound Primo Carnera. While Kofoed makes a weak case that Carnera's "rise to the heavyweight championship of the world was not due to size alone, but to his vast improvement in boxing and hitting," and makes no mention of fixed fights, he does a better job cataloging the many failures of other super-sized heavyweights.

There is an interesting sidebar, titled "The Case Against The Big 'Uns" that lists 20 so-called giants. While a number of them—Jan Plaacke, Ed Dunkhorst, Ray Impelletiere—would still be considered large heavyweights today, 11 of them are 220 pounds or less, which would be considered average-size heavyweights by current standards.

"Broadcast From New York" by Eddie Borden illustrates how some things never seem to change. Borden used a good chunk of his column to criticize the National Boxing Association's ratings.

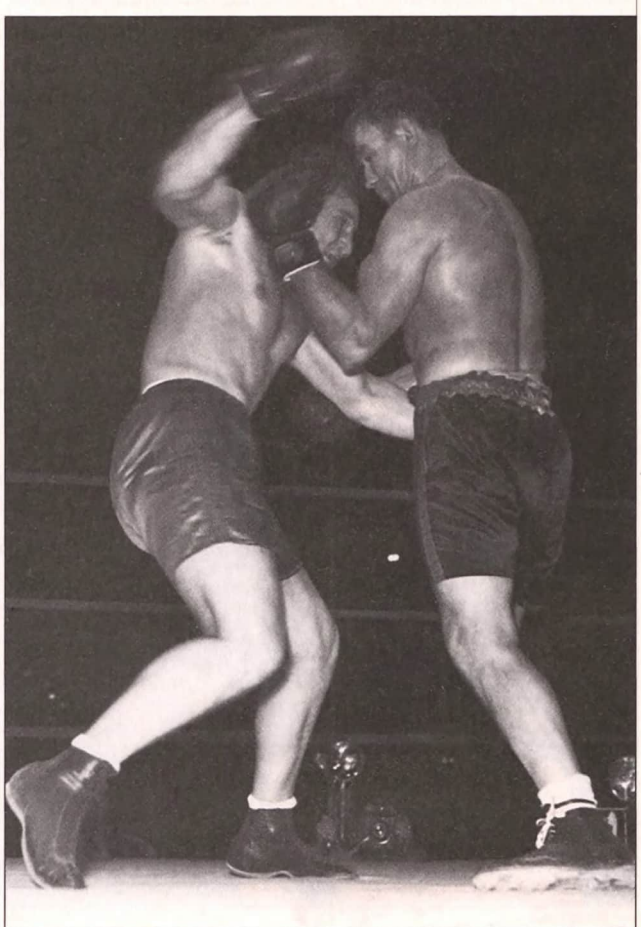
"In the heavyweight division, Johnny Risko was overlooked, and considering that his last start was a victory over Tommy Loughran, who is ranked sixth, the selection merits an explanation," writes Borden, who ends his division-by-division critique by "And to think that such men try to rule boxing."

In another item, Borden mentions that Texas, where boxing had recently been legalized, had 32 licensed boxing promoters.

"In And Near Chicago" by local correspondent Frank Maestro details King Levinsky's 10-round decision over former heavyweight champ Jack Sharkey in a bout that attracted a paid attendance of 21,218 to White Sox Park, plus "hundreds of boys and men who clambered over the iron picket fence or crashed the unprotected gates.

"Levinsky outpunched the Boston fighter in nearly every exchange," writes Maestro of the fight itself. "When the battling was toughest, it was Sharkey who backed away."

"Timely Chatter From Great Britain" by John H. Sharpe contains a small but revealing item concerning the "first television boxing show on record." The show consisted of two bouts, an exhibition between Archie Sexton and Lauri Ratteri, and Billy Lewis outpointing Freddy Baxter. ■



Levinsky (left) and Sharkey battle in front of more than 21,000 fans

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly Of Sparring

Sparring is a crucial element of a boxer's preparatory work, but is all too often overused by trainers and fighters. Sadly, it is probably the most culpable factor in acute and chronic brain injury.

Although sparring is essential to a fighter's development, experts agree that it needs to be used sparingly. Highly sought after trainer and former two-division titleholder James Buddy McGirt notes, "I don't believe in a lot of sparring. I don't have my fighters spar more than three times a week; no more than four to six rounds."

McGirt starts boxers sparring three to four weeks before a 10- or 12-round fight, and two weeks before a four- or six-round bout. Former WBA light heavyweight titleholder and current trainer Mustafa Muhammad allows five to six rounds of sparring per session.

Although both Mustafa Muhammad and McGirt end sparring a week before a fight to avoid injury, during the process, factors are continually evaluated, including how out of shape the fighter was before starting camp, how much did his last camp take out of him, and how much weight he has to lose. Both trainers are against gym wars.

According to McGirt, "If a guy in my gym starts a fight, no ifs and buts about it, I don't tolerate it. I stop his workout early and tell him to be careful. You have to take extra precautions when you send a fighter to someone else's camp. They called and wanted my kid (James McGirt Jr.) to go to camp with Antonio Margarito. I said, 'Do you think I am retarded?' It would have been a daily gym war, and I wouldn't be there to watch him. I said no way."

McGirt will chose sparring partners that make his fighters think and work. "I see guys that want sparring partners with similar size and style of their opponent," he said. "I am from the old school. Work is work, and through it you learn to make adjustments."

Mustafa Muhammad doesn't allow sparring partners more than 10 pounds over his fighter's weight and prefers them to be on the same level or slightly better than his fighter.

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Too much sparring endangers a boxer's health

"I believe the more you spar the better you get, but I make it clear it is not an actual fight," said Mustafa Muhammad, who always asks his fighters how they are feeling each and every time they enter the ring and when they finish. "If they don't feel right; they don't spar. Gym supervision at all times is important."

Fighters such as Floyd Mayweather are gym rats, but take time off between sparring sessions and stay in shape with techniques other than sparring, such as hitting the mitts or the heavy bag, and shadow boxing. Fighters that don't follow this philosophy, with a predisposition to chronic brain injury, are at great risk by sparring too frequently.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO\

Buddy McGirt (wearing hat) is careful with whom he allows his son, James (foreground), to spar

Former WBC and WBA junior middleweight titleholder Terry Norris loved to spar round after round. In 2000, at age 33, he was denied a license to box due to slurred speech believed to be a result of chronic brain injury from boxing.

Headgear used in the gym does little, if anything, to protect a fighter from cerebral trauma. It can provide a false sense of security to a boxer taking repeated head blows, and if it fits improperly, the fighter loses his chin tuck, which further increases the risks.

Each of us is blessed with a certain number of days in our life. We can extend that number by following a healthy exercise program, eating well, and getting plenty of rest. It isn't much different for boxers. Although everyone's genetics, anatomy, and skill are different, there are only a certain number of punches a boxer can take in their career before the blows lead to slurred speech, slowed reflexes, or death. As a result, sparring should be treated with care. The benefits to a boxer are insurmountable in comparison with other forms of training. But the risks cannot be ignored, and the act itself must be taken seriously as the ill effects can be permanent and counterproductive to a successful career.

On the Backs of Fighters

Recently, the World Boxing Council held their second World Medical Congress at an upscale hotel in Cancun, Mexico. I was fortunate to attend the first meeting in Aruba, and was invited to speak at the Cancun event, but was unable to clear my schedule. This year's meeting included speakers from the medical community discussing advancements and suggestions to improve boxing safety.

Title matches and championship belts are important to fighters, but these alphabet organizations, for good or for bad, survive on a portion of fighters' purses. Nevertheless, most boxers are willing to pay large fees to compete for the various organizations' belts.

If this weren't reason enough for officials to never accept anything free from a sanctioning body, there is that little thing called *ethics* that should take precedence. An official has one chance to prove they are independent from outside influences. Once he/she crosses that boundary, their reputation can never be restored.

In an effort to boost attendance, the WBC offered a room and board stipend to have one commission-approved physician attend the World Congress, with another commission physician receiving a significant discount.

The American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians (AAPRP), which holds a yearly convention educating boxing physicians, advised its members (of which I am one), that partial funding would be available for many AAPRP members through the WBC. Although the AAPRP is a trade organization, it now acts as the Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC) medical committee. Therefore, its members are bound by the same statutes as others regarding the Federal Law's conflict of interest provision [15 USC 6308 (a)].

This conflict was brought to the attention of the AAPRP and WBC. The WBC then re-offered the stipends through the Mexican government.

While I am certain the Mexican government would have been honored to hold this conference, it is difficult to fathom why and how they were able to donate such a large sum of money subsidizing hundreds of physicians to attend a four-day meeting at a prestigious hotel.

I commend everyone who attended the meeting, but if anybody accepted free or discounted room and board, all I can say to those attendees, the ABC who fell short when it needed to intervene, and the commissions who ignored this issue is shame, shame, shame!" ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Mayweather-De La Hoya Reaction

After having read and or listened to all the Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya postfight articles and interviews at my disposal, I've concluded that the only persons watching the fight were Tom Kaczmarek, Floyd Sr., and myself. 116-112 Mayweather! Are you kidding me? CompuBox nodded off during this one. Anyone with vision could see that the majority of Mayweather's punches hit Oscar's gloves. Sure, Oscar fought in spurts, but his spurts in seven of the 12 rounds were significant enough to take the round. HBO's commentators consistently praised Floyd for his poise and relaxed demeanor, when more accurately he appeared uncertain and perplexed much of the time. Next time around, Oscar will undoubtedly take it out of the hands of the judges!

LYNDON ALMS
Houston, TX

"The World Awaits" was more like "The World vs. Floyd Mayweather." I felt completely nauseated during the ludicrous, Oscar-loving commentating by the Hallucination Broadcast Organization. I've grown to expect Jim Lampley's nonsense, but Emanuel Steward ought to know better. There are barely words to describe my disgust with, not only HBO, but also Oscar. For him or anyone with eyes to even suggest that the decision in favor of Mayweather was somehow controversial is completely lame. Had Max Kellerman not been there to render the only voice of truth, only God knows what I would have barfed up.

JOHNATHAN L. IVERSON
New York, NY

There was too much hype and *24/7* episodes for a fight that turned

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

As you would expect, the Mayweather-De La Hoya fight generated the most letters this month. Among the readers expressing a variety of diverse opinions are Lyndon Alms, Johnathan L. Iverson, Manuel Daniel Rosales, Shawn O'Donnell, and John Baptiste.

out to be way less entertaining than expected. There is nothing wrong with promotion, but a title like "The World Awaits," and with statements like, "This is the fight that can save boxing" is pushing it over the limit. And please, no rematch. I don't see the outcome being any different. Besides, there are way better rematches waiting. Juan Manuel Marquez-Manny Pacquiao II, anyone?

MANUEL DANIEL ROSALES
Durango, Mexico.

On May 5, I witnessed something very sad. A fight that was supposed to save boxing, but could possibly put the final nail in its coffin. A more skilled and talented fighter defeated Oscar De La Hoya, boxing's most powerful and recognizable superstar. Winner Floyd Mayweather has everything a fighter could ever want, but, sadly, Floyd rejects all notions of playing the congenial role model that the sport needs now more than ever. Performance is important, but creating a connection with the audience is what brings people back time after time. This is the reason why people cannot get enough of fighters like Aurturo Gatti. Floyd is a great fighter, but his connection to his audience is in the role of the guy you want to see get defeated. This is not good for the sport.

SHAWN O'DONNELL
swodonnell@shaw.ca

Once again, I feel like a sucker. The Mayweather-De La Hoya fight, although good, was not worth the hype or the price. Being the avid fan that I am, I should have known better.

JOHN BAPTISTE
Long Island, NY

New Target For Pac-Man

In an era in which many boxers claim to be multiple title winners, I find it very strange that none of boxing's big media outlets have called for a Joel Casamayor-Manny Pacquiao bout. Given Casamayor's average height and power for a lightweight and Pac-Man's all-action style and one-shot power, it would be a very good match-up for the latter.

JEFF OKURA
Toronto, Ontario

Rankings Pro & Con

What can a fighter do to get into your rankings? I see you have Demetrius Hopkins ranked number seven after his controversial, horribly judged, so-called win against me. Is there any justice for a fighter when you guys actually reward a guy that didn't deserve the decision by bumping him up the rankings and not putting in a guy who clearly deserved and earned the win?

STEVE FORBES
twopound@hotmail.com

I hear and see much about the rankings systems now employed by the different alphabet soup organizations. As a more than casual but not expert fan, I can't help but wonder where is all this going? The ruination of the sport? The continued loss of true knowledgeable fans? With that said, I looked, for the first time, at THE RING's current rankings. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Common sense and knowledge can still be found in the sport. Your pages have gone a good way in restoring a bit of my lost faith.

MIKE BRADY
bradym40@hotmail.com

Death Of A Warrior

I found myself strangely affected on learning of the death of former lightweight champion Diego Corrales. They say that fighters reveal a part of themselves in the ring and, if so, then perhaps that is why I felt as though I had lost a friend without having ever personally met the man. I have watched many fights, both vintage and recent, and Corrales' win over Jose Luis Castillo two years ago remains in my mind the greatest fistic contest ever staged. Not just because of the obvious drama and brutality of the bout, but because it was, for me, one of the most emotional experiences in recent years, a moment that will forever be a part of me. Corrales may have never been part of the pound-for-pound elite, but he was something much more special—an awe-inspiring warrior the likes of which comes along once every 50 years or so.

KEN BRIDGHAM
KBridgham1979@aol.com ■

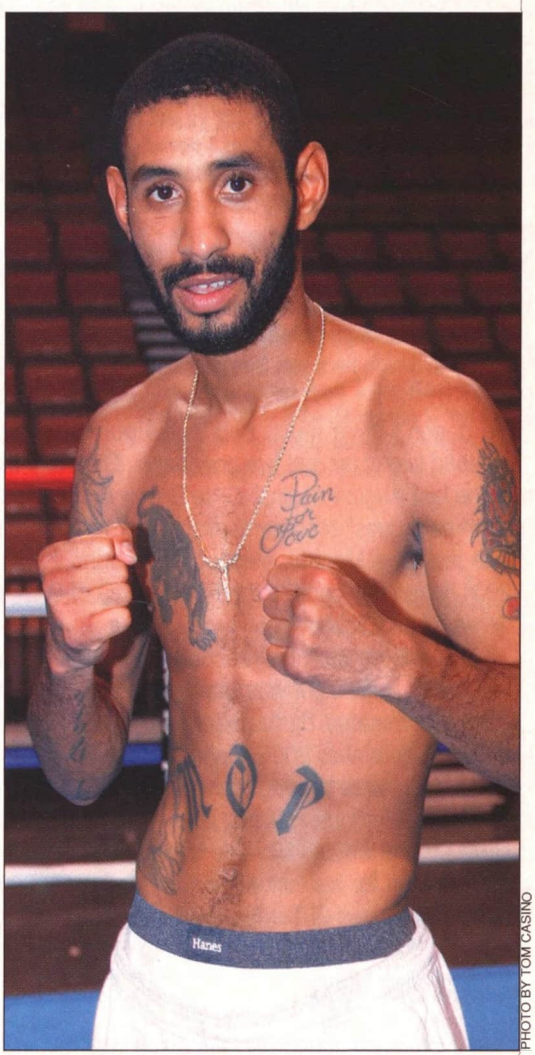


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

The tragic death of Diego Corrales in a motorcycle accident was a blow to both the sport and "Chico's" many fans. Reader Ken Bridgham writes to express his personal sorrow at the passing of the former lightweight champion.

[Looking Ahead]

By Joe Santoliquito

Morales Needs To Rekindle The Old Magic

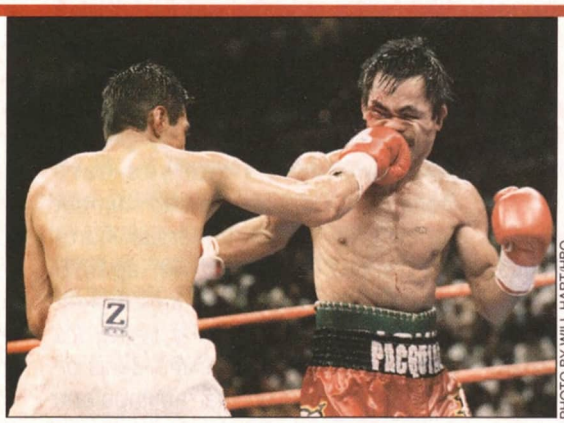


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Morales' last victory came more than two years ago, in the first meeting with Pacquiao

When we last saw **Erik Morales**, he was looking up forlornly at **Vic Drakulich**, as the referee counted down what appeared to be the end of "El Terrible" as a world-class fighter. Last November, Morales took an awful beating from Philippine dynamo **Manny Pacquiao** over three rounds, getting counted out for the first time in his career. Morales, 48-5 (34), could do little if anything against "Pac-Man's" blistering handspeed. El Terrible was knocked down once in the second round and two more times in the third, before making eye contact with Drakulich and his corner as if to say "I've had enough."

Now it appears that it wasn't enough. Morales will get another chance to break back into the elite when he takes on WBC lightweight titlist **David Diaz** at the Allstate Arena, in Rosemont, Illinois, August 4, on an HBO Pay-Per-View card.

Morales is not only looking to redeem himself from consecutive stoppage defeats to Pacquiao, but also rid himself of a funk in which he's lost three straight and four of his last five.

Diaz, 32-1-1 (17), may be the perfect tonic for Morales. He doesn't have much pop in his punch, though he has stopped two of his last five opponents. Diaz' signature victory came last August against **Jose Santa Cruz** when, down on all three judges' scorecards, he scored a 10th-round TKO. The last time Morales stopped an opponent was October 2004, when he scored a third-round TKO of **Guty Espadas Jr.** as a junior lightweight.

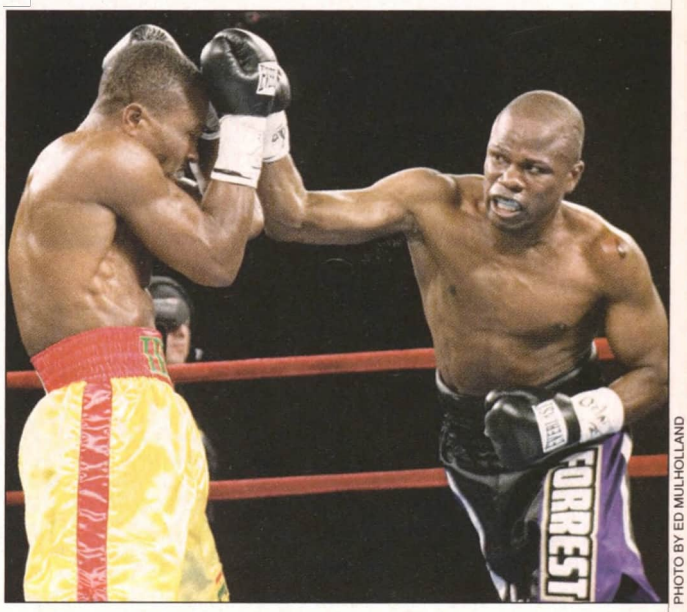
This will be Morales' second step up to 135. His first venture at lightweight was utterly forgettable. He was completely dominated by feather-fisted **Zahir Raheem**, 28-2 (16), in September 2005. Raheem has gone 1-1, with one no-contest, since beating Morales.

The real intrigue in facing Diaz will be which Morales will show up, the vintage Morales fans saw the night he defeated Pac-Man for his last victory, on March 19, 2005, or the swollen, dejected El Terrible everyone last remembers?

Listen Up

An intriguing match will take place later this month when **Carlos Baldomir** faces **Vernon Forrest**, on July 28, in a battle between two former world welterweight champions. Baldomir, 43-10-6 (13), will step up to fight Forrest at junior middleweight after experiencing a one-sided thrashing from world welterweight champion **Floyd Mayweather**, back in November 2006. Forrest, 38-2 (28), returns to the ring after winning a highly controversial 10-round split-decision over **Ike Quartey**, on August 5, 2006 ... Speaking of Mayweather, there was talk of a possible Mayweather-**Shane Mosley** welterweight showdown sometime this fall. It would be the perfect follow-up fight for "Pretty Boy," coming off the record-breaking May 5 PPV show against **Oscar De La Hoya**. It would also indicate where Mayweather stands in terms of mainstream sports appeal. His PPV numbers against **Zab Judah** were low, and both times Mayweather has garnered major PPV buys, it's been the opponent who's been the stronger attraction, first **Arturo Gatti** and then De La Hoya ... WBC heavyweight titlist **Oleg Maskaev** will finally meet **Sam Peter**, and it appears it will happen September 29, according to **Dino Duva**, president of Duva Boxing, who won the purse bid for the fight. Duva said the venue could be either Las Vegas or Moscow.

Maskaev, 34-5 (26), beat **Peter Okhello** in December his last time out, while Peter, 28-1 (22), is coming off his most impressive victory as a pro, his January rematch against **James Toney**. ■



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Forrest could use something more emphatic than his last decision over Quartey

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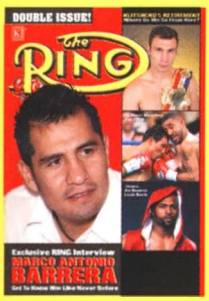

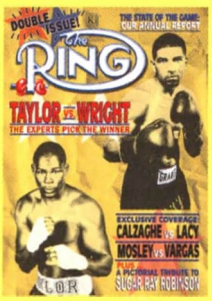

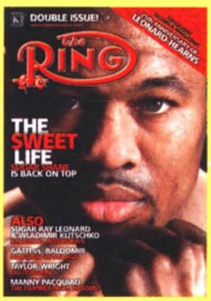

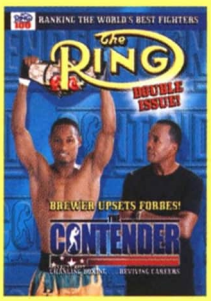

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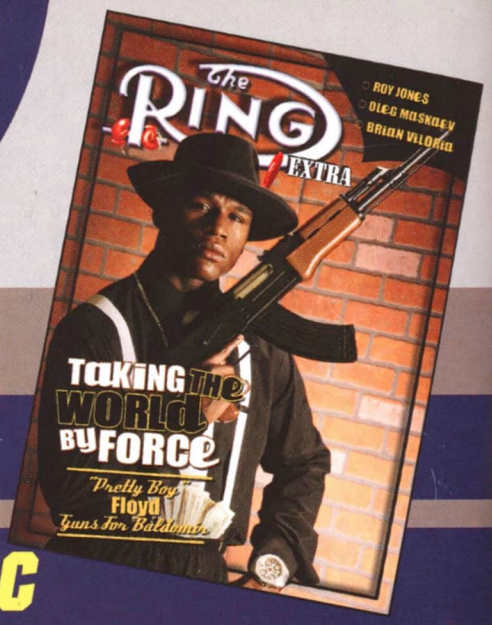

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